

T H E
D U T I E S
O F T H E
C L O S E T.
B E I N G A N
Earnest Exhortation
T O
Private Devotion.

St. Matthew 6. 4.

*Thy Father which seeth in secret, himself
shall reward thee openly.*

The Third Edition, Corrected.

L O N D O N.

Printed for Thomas Speed, over against
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Alley in Cornhil, M D C C I I.

D U T I E S

C R O S S E T.

BEING AN

Earnest Exhortation

TO

Private Devotion.

By the Rev. Mr. John ...
of the ...

THE ...
LONDON: ...
17...

T O

His very much Esteemed Friend

Mr. B. C.

Dear Friend,

I Am very sure, that nothing can be unacceptable to you which tends to the promoting of Religion, and reviving the decay'd Spirit of Piety. I know with how much Compassion and Concern you behold the Prophaneness of the present Age, how vigorously you oppose it, and how truly and sincerely you Mourn for it. And therefore I could not tell to whom I should rather dedicate these Papers, than to you, by whom I know they will be kindly receiv'd; if for no other Reason, yet for this, that they were well and honestly design'd, and aim at a Great and Noble End.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

I do not intend to make a long Epistle, but only to let you see, by these few rude Lines, that wherever I am, or whatever I am doing, you are still in my Thoughts; and more especially then, when I am engag'd in any Religious Work, it being almost impossible to think of Religion, and not to think of you, who are so nearly related to her. But I hate any thing that looks like Flattery, especially between Friends, and therefore I shall add no more, but what I can add with a great deal of Sincerity, that I wish you all the Happiness both of this and another World, and that I shall always rejoyce, when I can meet with an Opportunity of shewing you how much I am,

Your faithful Friend,

and humble Servant.

T H E

The Preface
~~where only God and our own~~
T H E
P R E F A C E.

TWO things are generally expected from the Author of every Book. First, That he should tell the World why he wrote it; and Secondly, how he has wrote it.

I am very sorry that I am able to give so good a Reason for the Writing of this as I am; and I heartily wish there had been no occasion for it. But the general neglect of Devotion that is too visible, calls loudly for it, and makes all Apologies for Writing on this Subject needless.

When I consider'd with my self how little Devotion is expressed in Publick, where it is Mens Interest sometimes to put on a Form of Godliness; I could not help making this unhappy Inference, that there could be scarce any left in the Closet,

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Closet, where only God and our own Souls see what we do. For how can we imagine that Men, who will not vouchsafe to show common Civility to Religion in publick, where it may be for their Interest to do it, should receive her into their Retirements, and make her their familiar and bosom Friend? This is a sad and melancholy Reflection to me; I was unwilling to believe it, and yet it was too plain to be believ'd. What then should I do? Should I sit still and bewail in private this Decay of Piety? Or should I not rather think on some way to revive the ancient Spirit of Devotion, and to bring Closet-Religion into Fashion? This certainly did best become me, and this could be done no other way, than by endeavouring, in a publick Writing, to convince the World of the Danger they were in, by the neglect of the Closet-Duties, and consequently of the Necessity that lay upon them, if they would get out of their Danger, to be more exact and frequent in the Performance of them for the future, than they have hitherto been. And

The Preface.

And indeed I know nothing more necessary than the keeping up a Sense of Closet-Religion in the World; for if this once fails, Sincerity will soon take her Leave of us. Publick-Religion may be, and I fear often is, only acted for Worldly Interest, and consists in outward Show and Formality. But he that is Religious in his Closet, must be so upon true Principles; for nothing can engage him to be Religious there, but a true Sense of his Obligations to serve and fear God, not for any Worldly End, but upon a much better account, purely to please God, and to save his own Soul.

Thus much for the Occasion of Writing this Book. As to the Manner of Writing it, I have only this to say, That it is written with all the Plainness and Simplicity imaginable, and with as much Brevity as a Discourse of this Nature would bear.

One thing more I desire the Reader to take notice of, and that is, That I design'd not this Book for the ordinary People, but for those who are in some
measure

The Preface.

measure Masters of their own Time, and therefore I have prescrib'd much longer Devotions, than are suitable to the Condition of Labouring People.

I heartily and earnestly beseech God, such as it is, to prosper it, and to grant that it may have that Effect which it aims at, the making Men truly Pious and Religious.

The

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THE
INTRODUCTION.

Shewing

The Obligations we lie under frequently to Retire into our Closets, and the Duties there to be performed by us.

IT being in vain to talk to Men of the Duties of the Closet, till they are thoroughly perswaded, that there are such Duties; I think it absolutely necessary, before I proceed any farther, to show the indispensable Obligations we lie under, frequently to retire into our Closets; and, having taken our Leaves of the World for a time, wholly to apply our selves to such Acts of Religion as I shall hereafter direct Men to, as most proper for that place.

B

And

And, for the doing of this, methinks it should be sufficient only to put Men in mind, that they are Christians; and, as such, are oblig'd, even whilst they live here upon Earth, *to have their Conversation in Heaven.* So that if Men would but seriously endeavour to become Christians in good earnest, if they would resolve *to walk as becomes the Gospel of Christ,* they would soon see the necessity of Retirement in their Christian Conversation. For alas! how is it possible to hold Conversation with God and the World together? Know ye not, as St. James saith: 4. 4. *that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* If therefore we desire to become Friends of God, if we would enjoy his Conversation, it must be in our Closets; where, when we have shut out his irreconcilable Enemy the World, he will most freely communicate himself to us.

But, because we find by sad Experience, that all the Arguments we can heap together, are scarce sufficient to keep Men firm and stedfast in their Duties; I shall not rest satisfy'd with what I have said, but proceed to show the necessity of Closet-retirement from these following Considerations.

First, From the Nature of several Christian Duties, which can be perform'd nowhere

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where but in our Closets; so that we must either be contented to leave them wholly unperform'd, or else own the absolute necessity of retiring into our Closets, where alone we can discharge our selves of them.

Of this nature, are Reading the Scriptures, Self-examination, and Divine Meditation.

First, Reading the Scriptures, a Duty so absolutely necessary, that without it, it is impossible to know what the Duties of a Christian are. For in these are the Conditions of our Eternal Happiness contain'd, and if we do not take care to acquaint our selves well with them; we shall never be able to perform them, as we ought to do.

And in what place, I beseech ye, shall we read these Holy Oracles, upon which the Eternal Salvation of our Souls and Bodies depends? Shall we satisfy our selves with looking them over in a crowd, and in company? If so, I think we show very little Concern for our Immortal Souls, and the Affairs of another World, little indeed, even less than we express for the trifling Affairs of this Life. For where shall we find a considering Man that will content himself with a slight View of any Deed or Writing, upon which his whole Estate depends? Will not Men in this Case withdraw them-

selves from Company, and with the greatest Care and Attention imaginable overlook their Writings, and weigh every Word they read, for fear they should commit any Oversight or Mistake? And is the Soul then of less value than the Body? Or is our eternal Inheritance in the Heavens less worth looking after than the short-liv'd Riches of this World? No certainly: We can never read that Book, in which are contain'd the Conditions of Immortal Life, with Care and Attention enough. We can never need so much to be void of Disturbance and Distraction, as when we are going to acquaint our selves with the narrow Way that leads to everlasting Happiness, and to learn how we may avoid that broad and well-beaten Way which leads to everlasting Ruin and Destruction. No Mistake can be of like fatal Consequence, with a Mistake in this Point; and therefore now, if ever, ought we to free our selves from all Worldly Incumbrances, and to withdraw into some private place, where, with undisturb'd and watchful Thoughts, we may peruse this important Book of Life and Death.

Secondly, Another Duty proper to the Closet, is Self-examination. A Duty of that great Usefulness to Christians, in order

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er to the managing their Conversation a-
right; that, had we no exprefs Command
of God for the Performance of it, as we
have, 2 Cor. c. 13. v. 5. yet our own Rea-
son would oblige us to it.

And this can no where be perform'd but
in our Closets: For it requires the greatest
Attention of Mind, the greatest seriousness
and fixedness of Thought, that we can pos-
sibly attain to. It is a stating of Accompts
between God and our own Souls; and if
thro' Carelesness we happen to commit a
Mistake in this our Reckoning, the Conse-
quence of such a Mistake may perchance be
no less than the eternal Ruin of our Souls
and Bodies. When therefore we set about
this weighty Work, we ought to bid adieu
to all Worldly Cares and Perplexities, to free
our Thoughts from all Business of this Life,
and wholly to apply our selves to this great
Affair. And this is no more than what we
our selves own to be necessary, by our con-
stant Proceedings in our Worldly Concerns.
The Merchant, when he has a mind to settle
his Accompts, shuts himself up close, and
will not be disturb'd upon any account
whatsoever. And shall we then grudge to
bestow that Care upon our Souls, which
we so freely undertake for our Bodies?
Shall our paltry Accompts of this Life,

wherein a Mistake is of no great Consequence, make us call together all our Care and Attention, and sequester our selves from Noise and Company, till our Business is finish'd? And shall we think it hard to spend a little time in private, in stating this grand Accompt between God and our own Souls? No surely: If we have any Reason in us, as we pretend to have, we shall never dispute it. But, whether we dispute it or no, it's most certainly our Duty frequently thus to examine our selves with the greatest Strictness and Exactness imaginable, and consequently, it's our Duty frequently to retire into our Closets, where alone we can be at leisure to attend this weighty Work without Distraction.

The third and last Duty I mention'd, as proper to the Closet, was Divine Meditation, or the Contemplation of God and Divine Objects; which is a very considerable part of that Heavenly Conversation which Christians are oblig'd to.

And now certainly Men ought to shake off all Earthy Filth and Dross, when their Souls are preparing to mount to Heaven; for these will hinder and retard their Ascent; at least, they will make their Motion less brisk and lively; nay, perhaps they will be such a dead weight upon the Soul, as to
keep

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keep it from ascending at all towards Heaven. When therefore we would set apart any time for this Duty, we must, as 'twere, go out of this lower World, that is, we must for a time, free our selves, as much as we can, from the Thoughts of this World, or any thing belonging to it. And the only way to do this, is to retire into some private place, where there shall be no variety of Worldly Objects to divert and distract our Affections; but our Thoughts shall be free and disengag'd, and fully and entirely fix'd upon the glorious Objects of Heaven. Solitude is a very great Friend to Devotion; for it takes our Minds off from those mean Objects, which the Affairs of the World generally presents to us, and makes them fit to soar aloft, and to contemplate such Objects as are much more noble, and more agreeable to our Rational Faculties. But the World is an utter Enemy to any thing that is good; it ties our Thoughts and Affections fast to it self, and it's in vain to think of Heaven without renouncing Earth. Adieu therefore thou perpetual Enemy of all Christian Duties, but more especially of Religious Meditation. Behold! I leave and forsake thee, that I may cleave entirely to my God; that my Thoughts and Affections may follow him alone, and that I may feast my self

with the sweet and comfortable Contemplation of Him and his Glories.

Thus must every Christian say, who intends to perform the Duties I have been treating of. For they all require great care and thoughtfulness, and therefore are only fit works for that Place, where Men usually, that ever consider, call their thoughts together, I mean the Closet.

But, besides the Duties just mention'd, which are proper only to the Closet; there are others both Publick and Private: That is, such as are to be perform'd by us, both publickly in our Churches and Families, and privately in our Closets too.

Of this sort are Confession of Sins, Prayer, Thanksgiving and Humiliation, or Mourning, both for our own and other Mens Sins. These are by all allow'd to be Duties of the Church and Family; and I make no doubt, but that they will appear to be Duties of the Closet too, to all who give themselves leave to consider what follows.

First, That every Man has particular Sins to confess, particular Blessings to ask, particular Mercies to give thanks for, and particular Failings both of his own and other Mens to bewail; which there neither ought to be, nor indeed can there be, any
pro-

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provision made for in the Devotions of the Church, or Family.

There ought to be no provision for them, because, if it could be, it would be a thing of very ill consequence. It would oblige us to reveal all, even our most hidden faults to the World; to publish all our wants and necessities, of what nature or kind soever; to make known to every body, who were the greatest Favourites of Heaven, and received the largest Gifts from God; which to say no more of it, would be very inconvenient.

But, besides the inconvenience, it's a thing impracticable; for it's impossible to make any publick Form of Prayer, which shall suite all Mens particular and private Occasions. And therefore our Publick Confessions, Prayers, Thanksgivings and Humiliations, all run in General Terms, which are suitable to the common conditions of Men, but will not answer all their private occasions. Every Day almost brings some new unforeseen accident upon us, which could not possibly be provided for in our Publick Devotions. And besides, the particular and casual wants of Men, and their particular Sins and Mercies, are so numerous and various, that were it possible to reckon them up, and to digest them under proper

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Heads, and insert them into our publick Devotions, it would make them endless.

The Closet therefore is the proper place for these Duties. Here every private Man has time enough for this Work, and may do it without the least Inconvenience. Here he may safely acknowledge his most secret Sins, and not suffer in his Reputation, by this his Acknowledgment. Here he need not be asham'd to own all his Wants and Necessities, and to ask a Supply for them. Here he may freely return Thanks to God for all his Mercies, without being envy'd for them. Lastly, Here he may pour out his Soul in Tears and Lamentations for his own and other Mens Sins, and need not fear being derided for them.

But, that these are Duties of the Closet, as well as of the Church and Family, will appear farther.

Secondly, From the Practice of inspir'd Men of Old, who constantly perform'd these Duties in private, as well as in publick. Thus we may find *Daniel* making a Confession of his Sins in private, *Dan.* 9. Thus *David*, *Daniel*, *St. Peter*, *St. Paul*, nay, and our Blessed Saviour himself too, offer'd up their Petitions to God in private, as we may read, *Psal.* 55. 17. *Dan.* 6. 10. *Acts* 10. 9. *1 Cor.* 22. 8. *Ephes.* 1. 16.

Mat.

Mat. 14. 23. Thus are we told, that *Daniel gave Thanks to his God in his Chamber three times a day, Dan. 6. 10.* And thus did the Soul of pious *Jeremiah* weep in secret places for the Sins of his People, as we may read *Jerem. the 13. 17.* So that, if any Argument may be drawn, for the Practice of any Duty, from the Examples of Men, (as certainly from those of inspir'd Men, who were immediately directed by God's Holy Spirit, there justly may) we have here a plain and cogent Argument, for the Performance of these Duties in private, taken not only from the Examples of good Men, but of Men inspir'd; nay, of Christ himself, who was God as well as Man.

Thirdly, We have the express Command of God for the Performance of some of these Duties in private. And therefore, were there no other Obligation, this would be sufficient. Thus *Mat. 6. 6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when thou hast shut the Door, pray to thy Father which is in secret.* Where the word *Pray* is to be taken in it's largest Sense, as comprehending Confession and Thanksgiving. For these being the constant Companions of our Prayer, (tho' they are not, properly speaking, parts of it, the word *Prayer* signi-

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signifying only a Petition or Request) it's very usual both in Scripture, and in the Writings of Holy Men, to conclude both these under the Name of Prayer. Again, *1 Tim. 2. 8. I will therefore that men pray every where*; not only in the Church, and in their Families, but in their Closets also.

The Summ of what has been said is this; That there are several Religious Duties which can be perform'd no where but in our Closets; that there are others, which are indeed to be perform'd elsewhere, but must be perform'd there also; as we learn, from Reason, the Examples of Holy Men, and the Commands of God himself.

From hence I conclude, that it is absolutely necessary for every Man to set apart some time for the Worship of God in Private, where he may be at leisure to perform the above-mention'd Duties.

THE

THE
DUTIES
OF THE
CLOSET.

CHAP. I.

*Shewing how we ought to behave
our selves at our first coming
into our Closets.*

HAVING brought you to your Closet, I think it necessary to instruct you, how you may behave your self in it, so as to be the better for coming into it. And for this end, I would advise you, before you apply your self to any particular Duty, to reflect seri-

2 *The DUTIES of the CLOSET.*

seriously upon these following Considerations.

First, How inexcusable all wandering thoughts will be in this Place. The design of your coming hither is, to gain an opportunity of waiting upon God without distraction. For this Reason, you have left your Business, forsaken your Company, and withdrawn your self from the World. You have now no variety of earthly Objects to divert your thoughts from Heaven; you are shut up from all the Charms and Temptations of this World, and may be as intent upon the affairs of another World as you please. 'Tis true, your Mind may go out of the Closet, and you may even when you are there, be as deeply immers'd in Worldly and sensual Thoughts, as when you are in the midst of Company. But it must be your own Fault, if you are so. In our Publick Devotions we may meet with many accidental diversions, occasion'd by the great variety of outward Objects that surround us; but we cannot plead this in our Retirements. If we keep our Minds within our Closets, we shall find it an easie matter to fix them upon such Objects as are proper for those Places; and if we let them go out of them, and ramble about the World, it is not for want of power and opportunity, but want of will and endeavour,

The DUTIES of the CLOSET. 3

leavour, to restrain them. Resolve therefore with thy self to set a watch upon thy Thoughts, and to make advantage of thy Retirement, by sending up thy Mind, which may now easily disengage it self from Earth, to Heaven. Assure thy self, that God will most severely punish thee, if thou neglectest this opportunity of serving him with free and undistracted Thoughts, and therefore do not presume to let the World have any part of thy Soul, but give it whole and entire to him.

Secondly, Consider how little all Hypocrisy and Insincerity will avail thee here. *To call upon God with our lips, while our hearts are far from him,* may do us some Service before Men, who cannot see into our Hearts; it may make us appear better to them than indeed we are, and so may be of advantage to us: But to dissemble where no body sees us but God, *who tryeth the heart and reins, and understandeth our thoughts afar off,* is an Argument of egregious Folly, and of great Imprudence. Men may possibly think it worth their while, to put on a Form of Godliness in their Publick Devotions, that by it they may obtain a good Reputation among Men, who can judg only by outward appearance: But in the Closet, where God only sees us, we can

4 *The DUTIES of the CLOSET.*

can have no Temptation to it. Nay we have great Reason to avoid Insincerity here, because all our time and pains will be lost, if we only employ our selves in a superficial Devotion. And it will be much better for us, never to pretend to worship God in our Closets, than to deceive our selves with a cold and careless, an external and heartless worshipping of him. Let thy Lips therefore and thy Heart go together, that so thou may'st reap some advantage from thy Devotions, by ingratiating thy self with God, who loves all such as serve him in Truth and Sincerity.

Thirdly and lastly, look upon thy Closet no more as an ordinary Room, but as the Temple of God; where he will be in a peculiar manner present, and take especial notice of all thy Actions. And let this Consideration sink so deep into thy Mind, that it may make thee fearful of doing any thing that is trifling or foolish, while you are engag'd in the Service of God. Let a decent Reverence appear in all thy Actions, such as thou would'st show, if thou coul'dst see God face to face. For tho' he does not visibly appear to thee, yet he is nigh, very nigh unto thee, and takes a more than ordinary Notice of thy Behaviour at this time.

These things I thought necessary to promise,

The DUTIES of the CLOSET. 5

nise, that Men might know the particular Obligations they lye under to Heavenly-mindedness, Sincerity and a reverent Awe of God, in their Private Devotions. If they carry not these along with them, through all their Duties, they cannot perform them acceptably; and therefore it behoves them earnestly to endeavour to put on these gracious dispositions of Mind, before they proceed to the Practice of particular Duties. And, that they may obtain these, and so perform their Duties, as they ought to do; it will be very proper for them to beg God's assistance in this, or some such Form of Prayer.

A Prayer.

O Holy and ever Blessed Lord God, who hast commanded me to wait upon thee in secret, Grant that I may behave my self so in thy presence, that thou, who seest in secret, may'st vouchsafe to reward me openly. Take from me, O Lord, all worldly thoughts, and give me grace so to set my affections on thee and all things above, that none of the Charms or Temptations of this World may be able to draw them down from thee. Enspirit and enliven my earthy drossy heart, that it may freely mount towards thee; and
that

6 The DUTIES of the CLOSET.

that I may apply my self to thee, with such a fixedness and Attention of Mind, as no wandring Thoughts may interrupt. Make me sincere in all my Duties; and let me not deceive my own Soul; for thou O Lord canst not be deceiv'd, with a slight and careless, a formal and lifeless performance of them. Thou requirest Truth in the Inward Parts: O purge from me all Hypocrisy and Insincerity. Lord Grant I may make my approaches to thee, with a reverence some way answerable to thy awful Majesty, and that, while I am in thy presence, I may do nothing which may dishonour thee, or wound my own Soul. Bless me, O Lord, I pray thee, in this Holy exercise which I am now beginning, Grant that it may be a means of improving me in all Piety, and Holiness and Vertue. Forgive all my frailties and imperfections, and be not strict to mark what I shall do amiss; but deal with me according to thy mercy and loving kindness, and accept of my imperfect Service, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Blessed Lord and Saviour.

Having thus beg'd Gods assistance by Prayer, we may now, with some Confidence apply our selves to our particular Duties, in such order and Method as I shall treat of them. And we need not doubt but that, if
we

The DUTIES of the CLOSET. 7

we are careful in the performance of our Work, God will bestow his blessing upon and prosper it.

CHAP. II.

Of Reading the Holy Scriptures.

THe first Duty we must apply our selves to, is Reading the Holy Scriptures. For this is the Ground-Work and Foundation of all our other Duties. The first thing we are to do, is to learn the Will of God, and the next to perform it.

And, that we may reap that benefit and advantage from them, which may justly be expected; let us take these following Instructions along with us.

Before we set our selves to Reading, let us consider what it is we are a going to read; and this is no less than the Word of God himself, nay farther, it is the Word of Eternal Life.

As it is the Word of God, it challengeth all Reverence and Respect at our hands. The Majesty of him who speaks is so great, that we cannot hear his words without the greatest Awe imaginable. Behold! it is He speaks, *Who created us by the breath of his mouth,*

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mouth, and sustains us by the word of his Power. It is He, whose Voice can shake the Mountains, and make the whole Earth to tremble; He, who is God over all, and gives Laws to the whole World, speaks now to us with an Audible Voice; and therefore certainly it becomes us to hear what He saith with Reverence. We dare not surely scoff at and deride his Words, who can in a moment turn us into Hell for doing so: We dare not presume lightly to esteem His Words, who is a God jealous of his Honour, and will revenge all Affronts offer'd to him, even to the Third and Fourth Generation. No, we will receive them with such a respect, as it becomes a poor, vile, dependent Creature to shew to his Creator, Preserver and Law-giver.

Secondly, Since it is God's Word; it deserves to be read by us with the greatest Care and Attention possible. When God speaks, it is certainly worth our while to hearken to him; for, whatever infinite Wisdom can say, must needs be of great use to Man. *Hearken therefore unto the word of the Lord, and incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart unto understanding.* Resolve before thou readeest, heedfully to mind what thou readeest, or else it will be better for thee not to read at all.

Thirdly,

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Thirdly, All God's Words must be be-
liev'd. Whatsoever comes from him must
be true; for He is Truth it self and cannot
lie. He cannot be deceiv'd by others, nei-
ther can He himself deceive any Man; and
therefore we may firmly depend upon what-
ever he saith, as infallibly true. *Thy word*
is true from the beginning, saith David;
and *He that sent me is true,* saith our
Blessed Saviour. *God is not a Man that he*
should lye, saith Moses; Nay, *God cannot*
lye saith St. Paul. He cannot be deceived,
because He is Omniscient, and knoweth all
things; nor can he deceive, because he is
Truth it self, and it is impossible for him
to lye. Prepare thy Soul therefore to re-
ceive whatever He saith, with a firm and
unshaken belief. Remember that it is God
who speaks, even *the God of Truth*, and
make no doubt of believing his Words.
Thou canst not offer a greater affront unto
him, than to dis-believe him; for this is to
call him a Lyar. And therefore it will be
less excusable for thee, never to look into
the Scriptures, than, when thou knowest
them to be the Word of God, to read
them constantly, without a steady Faith in
them.

Fourthly, Whatever God saith must be
obeyed by us. God is the Sovereign Law-
giver

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giver of the World, and may impose any Laws upon us his Creatures, that he pleaseth. And therefore, when he speaks, his Word must be a Law to us. *The Lord is our Law-giver*, saith *Isaiab*. He is that one *Law-giver who is able to save and to destroy*. Obey his Voice therefore, and provoke him not. As *Moses* said to the Children of *Israel*. The Scriptures contain the Laws of God *written with his own finger*, and he who reads them, and obeyeth them not, is a *transgressor of the Law, and shall perish*. Beware therefore of doing this. For it will be much better for you, never to read a Line of Scripture, than to read it frequently and not obey it. For to sin against a clear Light, which we have constantly in our Eye, is the greatest aggravation sin is capable of. Make this resolution therefore with thy self, before thou readest, that thou wilt sincerely Practice what thou readest.

Again, As the Scriptures are the Word of Eternal Life, that is, as they offer us Conditions, which if we perform, we shall most certainly obtain Eternal Life; they lay a fresh Obligation upon us to receive them with Reverence, Attention, Faith and Obedience. For what Gift shall we receive with Reverence and Respect, if not the Gift of Everlasting Happiness? What words

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ords shall we listen to, if not the words of Eternal Life? Where shall we show our readiness to believe, if we are slow to believe the greatest and most welcome News that ever Man heard? Lastly, What Commands shall we be willing to obey, if not those, which will reward our obedience with an Eternity of Happiness?

That therefore thou may'st read the scriptures, and be the better for them; nay, that thou may'st not be infinitely the worse for reading them; it will be necessary for thee, before thou ventur'st to open these Holy Books, to resolve that thou wilt peruse them with a most profound Reverence and Respect; that thou wilt listen to them with a most wakeful Attention, assent to them with an unfeigned Faith, and obey them with a sincere and ready Submission.

Having put on these Holy Resolutions, thou hast now nothing else to do, before thou settest thy self to reading, but to beg the assistance of God's Spirit, which alone can strengthen these thy Resolutions, and instruct thee in the things that are of God, in these words of our Church.

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, Grant that I may in such wise read, mark, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and

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and comfort of thy Holy Word, I may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

And now you may safely venture to unfold these Sacred Books, and look into them; and need not fear not being benefited by them, if in your reading of them, you are careful to observe these following Rules.

First, To chuse for your Reading such Portions of them as are most plain and intelligible, and relate most immediately to your Duty. Such as are in the Old Testament.

The whole Book of *Genesis*, which gives you an account of the Creation of all things by God, and of your self out of the Dust, and of the Fall of Man; which will tend mightily to establish Religion and Humility in your Soul. You have here also great instances of God's Displeasure and Severity against Sin; such as were that of the Destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* by Fire and Brimstone, and of the whole World by a Deluge of Waters. Here are great Examples of Piety and Faith in God, set before us, such as were those of *Enoch*, *Noah*, *Abraham*, *Joseph*, &c. In a Word, you will here meet with great Encouragements to

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to Piety and Vertue, from the Consideration of the special care God took of his Servants, *Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph*. But, what is above all, you have here very pregnant Promises of the Messiah, who should bless all Nations of the World by his coming.

Some parts also of the Book of *Exodus* must not be omitted, viz. those that give us an account of the Birth and wonderful Preservation of *Moses*, of God's Miraculous Protections and Deliverance of his People from *Pharaoh*, and of the Moral Laws Established among the *Israelites*. Other parts of this Book, which relate to the Judicial or Ceremonial Laws, though they are of great use for some ends, yet I think they are not so fit to be read by the Common sort of Christians, as other more practical parts of Scripture. *Leviticus* chiefly treats of the Ceremonial Law, and therefore is not very proper for the reading of ordinary Christians. There are indeed many good Precepts in it, but those which relate to us, we shall meet with in many other parts of the Bible. The same may be said of *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. I would by no means have it thought, that I judge these Books not to be worth our Reading; No, I am far from entertaining any such Prophan

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Thought.

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Thought. Our Church has taken care, that they shall be read to us in her Publick Service, where it is our Duty to hearken attentively to them. My desire only is, That Private Christians, may read those parts of Scripture chiefly in their Closets, which will most tend to better their Lives and Conversations, and to confirm and settle them in the Practice of Religious Duties.

The Books from *Deuteronomy* to *Job* are chiefly Historical, and though there are many Occurrences in them worth our Notice; yet I think there are several Books in the Old Testament, by the reading of which, we may much more improve our selves in Holiness and Vertue. Such are the Book of *Job*, the *Psalms*, the *Proverbs*, and *Ecclesiastes*.

The Book of *Job*, from the beginning to the end of it, sets before us such an Example of Resignation to God's Will, Patience, and Contentedness under the greatest Sufferings, of an unshaken Faith and Piety, and an Unblemished Integrity; as most highly deserves our Imitation. But this is not all; it gives us an admirable account of the Reason and Principles of all these Duties, and in every Line has something that is useful and instructive,

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The Book of *Psalms* is the best Book of Devotions in the World; it is almost wholly compos'd of Confessions, Prayers, Thanksgivings and Meditations; and it has such a Strange Power to cure Heaviness, to extirpate Grief, to lay asleep troublesome Thoughts and Passions, to ease us of our Cares, to recreate those who are oppressed with Pain, to move Compunction for Sin, and to promote fervent and affectionate Piety; that no Book in the World is to be compared with it for these purposes.

The Book of *Proverbs* was written by *Solomon*, the wisest of Men; and contains in it, so many admirable Instructions and Exhortations to all sorts of Vertue and true Wisdom, as make it exceeding useful; and plainly, shew that it came from the Spirit of Wisdom.

The Book of *Ecclesiastes* give us *Solomon's* Judgment of Worldly things, after he had tryed them all. And certainly it must be very valuable to know his Opinion of them, who not only by reason of his Wisdom, was best able to judg of them; but by reason of the affluence and plenty he enjoy'd of them, could give a better account of them, than any other Man under the Sun.

These Books therefore I would have thee take often in thy hands, being well assured

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that they are full of good and extraordinary useful matter.

The rest of the Books of the Old Testament are chiefly Historical and Prophetical; and upon that account, are neither so intelligible, nor instructive as the Books above-mentioned.

In the New Testament we must omit no Book, but that of the *Revelations*, which being extremely difficult to be understood, even by Men of great Skill and Learning, cannot possibly be proper for Unlearned Christians.

Thus much I thought necessary to say, to let you know in what parts of Scripture you may best employ your time. I would not have you slight the other parts, because they are less useful; they have all their uses, and those very great ones too; and though to thee, who hast neither Time nor Learning to search into the bottom of them, they may seem of little use; yet assure thyself they are not so. They are all the Words of that God, who never Speaks in Vain; and therefore though thou canst not discover their great Usefulness, yet they certainly have it.

Secondly, In your Reading make use of some plain Commentator to Instruct you in the true Sense and Meaning of the Words,
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and to show you the Connection of them. The Five Books of *Moses* were lately put out by the Reverend Dr. Kidder Bishop of *Bath and Wells*, with such a plain and familiar Paraphrase upon the Text, as will help us to understand it with ease. The Book of *Job*, the *Psalms*, the *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* have been some time extant, with such a Paraphrase of the Reverend Dr. *Patrick's* Bishop of *Ely*, as all Men justly admire for its clearness and conciseness. The best Paraphrase we have upon the New Testament written in our own Tongue, is that of the Learned Dr. *Hammond*. These are the only Books I can advise Unlearned Readers to, and these will be great helps to them.

Thirdly, Consider that the end of your reading the Scriptures is, *That you may know what you must do to be saved*. And therefore trouble not your Head with little impertinent Disputes about passages of Scripture that relate not at all to this important Question. All things necessary to be believed or done by you in order to your Salvation, are set down in plain and legible Characters; mind these, and read them over and over. But, if thou meet'st with difficulties in other places of Scripture, which do not so nearly concern thee, be not disquieted at them. He

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who finds enough in the Scriptures to carry him to Heaven, has answered the end of his reading them, and need not rack his Brain to solve those Difficulties, which will do him no Service when unfolded.

Fourthly, Have a care of perverting the sense of the Words, to make them serve any Opinion or Practise thou hast a kindness for. St. Peter complain'd in his time, *That there were unlearned Men who wrested the Scriptures to their own destruction, i. e.* who abused and perverted the sense of them, and thereby deceiv'd themselves, and became lyable to Destructions; as we also shall, if we endeavour to corrupt the Scriptures. Always remember, that we are first to enquire into the Sense of the Scripture, and then to make our Opinions and Practises conformable to it; and that we are not to resolve first what we will think or do, and then force the Scripture, right or wrong, to countenance our Opinions and Practises.

Fifthly, Never allow that to be the Sense of any disputable Passage in Scripture, which contradicts any other plain Passage of it. For God cannot contradict himself, and therefore when thou seest any Interpretation put upon his Words, which is directly contrary to some plain Words of

his

his in another place, be sure to reject it. For, whatever the meaning of the Words may be, it is certain this it cannot be.

Sixthly, Above all things, let us beware of being conceited of our own Understandings. Nothing will hinder us so much from learning the true sense and meaning of Scripture, as Pride and Self-conceit. For *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*. And therefore, let us take heed of being Positive and Dogmatical, and wedded to our own Opinions. Let us desire to be instructed by others, and let us humbly beg of God, that he would lead us into all Truth; for this is the most likely way to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.

Lastly, Let us take care to be frequent in this Duty. The best way to understand the Scriptures, is to read them frequently; for, when we are well acquainted with them, one place will help us to interpret another. It is impossible, in this case, to prescribe a certain Rule for all Men; their Circumstances being vastly different and unlike. But I would have no Man, who is Master of his own time, ever pass a day without reading some part of them; nay, I would have every such Man read them constantly when he retires to his Morning and Evening Devotions.

If we perform this Duty, according to the above-mentioned Rules, the Benefits, that will redound to us from it, will be unspeakable. For,

First, We shall hereby keep our selves in a constant Knowledge and Remembrance of our Duty. We are very apt, through a forgetfulness of God's Commands, to commit very many and great mistakes. And therefore we are often call'd upon to *take heed lest we forget the Covenant of the Lord our God*. If then we have a mind to resolve, with Holy David, *That we will never forget the precepts of God*; we must very often look into them, and by so doing, we shall always keep up the remembrance of them fresh and lively in our Minds.

Secondly, We shall in the Scriptures find many Powerful Motives and Encouragements to keep our selves stedfast in the Practise of our Duty. While with an Eye of Faith we look upon the great Rewards, that are every where promis'd in Scripture to God's Obedient Children, we shall never need any other Arguments to provoke us to well-doing. For if the hopes of Everlasting Life and Glory will not infuse Strength and Vigour into us, and make us go on confidently and chearfully in the Practise of our Duty; I am sure, no meaner consideration will

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will have any effect upon us. Again, if the Dreadful Threatnings denounc'd there, almost in every Page, against Sin and Disobedience, will not be able to deter us from them, no fear of lesser Punishments certainly will work upon us. Here alone have we such charming Invitations to Obedience, and such strong Arguments against Sin; as no other Book in the World can furnish us with.

Thirdly, These Holy Books will be great helps to us in our Devotions, not only as they set before us the Examples of Devout Men, but also as they are a rich Magazine of such Expressions as we shall have frequent occasion to use in our Confessions, Prayers and Thanksgivings to God. No Men can pretend that they can Praise God, and pray to him, in such an agreeable manner, as those Holy Men did, who were inspir'd by the Spirit of God himself; and therefore their Prayers and Hymns of Praise, their Confessions and Thanksgivings, are very proper Patterns for us at all times to imitate, and sometimes wholly to Transcribe.

Lastly, They will give us certain Ease and Comfort under all the Pressures and Afflictions of this Life. *Come hither all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall here*

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find rest unto your Souls. Come hither all ye that are oppressed with the Cares and Troubles of this World, nay, perhaps overwhelmed with the Injuries of it. Here you shall find one that will ease you of your Cares and Troubles, and defend you from the Affronts and Wrongs of a Wicked and Malicious World; *Let not your hearts faint therefore, fear not and do not tremble, neither be ye terrify'd; For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you.* This is the Language of those Sacred Books; this is that comfortable Language which will raise our Drooping Spirits, and administer sure Comfort unto us under our most heavy Afflictions. Read once again, and thou shalt there find, *That these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work for thee a far greater and eternal weight of Glory.* And now surely thou may'st not only bear thy Afflictions with Patience, but may'st Triumph and Glory in them. When thy God, the God of Truth calls to thee, and bids thee look up to Heaven and see a Bright Crown there prepar'd ~~for~~ thee; If thou bearest thy Afflictions with Patience, surely thou can'st not forbear *rejoycing in tribulation*; at least thou need'st not fear fainting, while thou keepest that Glorious and never-fading Crown in thy view.

Of Reading other Good BOOKS.

BEfore I conclude this Chapter, I think it will be convenient to say something concerning our Reading other good Books besides the Scripture. And this I will do in few Words, by advising you what Books will be most proper for your Reading, and by Instructing you how you ought to read them.

The Books most worthy our Reading, next to the Canonical Books of Scripture, which alone are to be counted the Word of God, are the *Apocryphal* Books, which are bound up at the end of your Bibles. These the Church doth order, *Artic. 6.* *To be read for Example of Life and Instruction of Manners;* and indeed, they are very well stor'd both with Precepts and Examples fit for this purpose.

Especially the Books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus*. I would have thee take frequently into thy Hands; for they are full of Excellent, I had almost said, Divine Wisdom, and will be of use to thee in all States and Conditions of Life whatsoever.

The Story of the *Maccabees* is a Noble Story, and richly deserves to be read, with care

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care and attention by us. The others have their several good uses; but these, which I have mention'd in particular are most worthy thy frequent perusal.

Few Books joyn'd to these, will be sufficient. *The whole Duty of Man*, Dr. Hammond's *Practical Catechisme*; Dr. Patrick's *Mensa Mystica*, his *Book of Prayers*; and Dr. Sherlock's Two Excellent Treatises on *Death and Judgment* will make a Library large enough for any ordinary Christian. If you have time enough to read more, you may consult your Spiritual Pastour, and there's no doubt but he will direct you to such, as are most proper for you.

In Reading of these Books, or any other of this Nature, observe these following Rules.

First, Consider that they are Wrote by Men, and therefore do not wonder, if thou findest Errors and Mistakes in them. The Authors of them may be very Extraordinary Men, but are not Infallible. And therefore we must not read these, with the same Faith and Confidence, that we do the Holy Scriptures, which were written by God. Who neither can be deceived or deceive.

Secindly, Read them without prejudice; let not the Man who wrote them, or some particular passage in them, give thee a distaste

distaste of the whole. Remember that thou art not to read the Man, but his Book, and if that be for thy use, it matters not who was the Author of it. Remember again, that it is not agreeable to the Rules of Wisdom to dislike a whole Book, for the sake of one or two, as we think, indecent or unwary Expressions in it. If the main of it be good, it will become us rather to overlook a few Faults, if there be any such in it, than to reject the whole for the sake of these few Blemishes. No Man would throw away a piece of Gold, because it has an alloy of some baser Metal mix'd with it. No, he will carefully separate the fine Gold, which is for his use, from the drossy and baser Particles which accompany it, and make his advantage of it.

Thirdly, Always remember to give thy Assent to them only so far as they agree with the Word of God. The design of Writing good Books, is to explain the Word of God, and to enforce the Precepts by that enjoin'd us. But, if Men go about to set up their own Traditions for God's Word, we must reject them with Scorn and Contempt. God certainly is more worthy of Belief than Man, and whoever offers to contradict Him, deserves to be censur'd by us, as a Deceiver, but not receiv'd, as a Prophet.

Prophet. God's Book is a perfect Book, and whoever offers to add to it, or diminish from it, ought to be look'd upon as an Impudent Prophane Wretch, who thinks himself wiser than God.

Fourthly and Lastly, Let us read them with Attention, and a Desire to improve our selves by them. The end of Reading, is to Inform and Instruct our selves by what we read. And therefore we had better let Reading quite alone, than offer to read without Attention. He only reads to purpose, who diligently laying up in his Mind what he Reads, shows forth the Fruit of it in his Life and Conversation. Let this then be the end of all our Reading, and let us show, that we minded what we read by Practising it.

And in the advancement of it, we must be careful to keep the Word of God, as the only Rule, and to reject all other Traditions, or God's Word, we must reject them with Scorn and Contempt. God certainly is more worthy of our Love and Reverence, than any Man, and whoever offers to contradict Him, deserves to be esteem'd by us as a Deceiver, and not receiv'd as a Prophet.

CHAP. III.

Of Self-examination.

AFTER we have been taking a view of our Duty, in the Holy Scriptures and other good Books; it will be very proper for us, to proceed to an Examination of our selves.

To examine our selves, is to take a serious and exact review of our past Thoughts, Words and Actions, and to try whether they have been such, as our own Reason, and the Written Law of God Command they should be.

The end of this Examination, or Reckoning with our selves, is to prepare our selves for that great Account which we must all give at the Day of Judgment; to correct whatever we find to be amiss in us, and to go on and persevere in whatever we find to be good, that so we may be ready for the *second Coming of our Lord*. Whatever therefore we shall be accountable for, at that Day, falls very properly under our present Examination. And, since we are very well assured that we must then give an Account of our Thoughts, Words and Actions,

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Actions, it becomes us now to make an exact and careful scrutiny of them.

First, We must examine our Thoughts; For there are Laws for these, as well as for our Words and Actions, and consequently, by a Transgression of these Laws, we become guilty of Sin, which is nothing else, but a *transgression of the Law*; and if guilty of Sin, then liable to Judgment. Our Saviour has told us, that *Whosoever looketh upon a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery*; that is, whosoever, upon the sight of a Beautiful Woman, conceives in his Heart a lustful desire of committing Adultery with her; tho' he does not actually do it, shall be look'd upon by God as an actual Adulterer. And in another place of Scripture, He condemns the Pharisees for *making clean the outside of the cup and platter, and having no regard to the inside*. That is, as He himself afterwards explains it, for endeavouring to appear righteous unto men, and, in the mean while, harbouring all hypocritical and wicked Thoughts. For this He denounceth a terrible Woe against them, *Mat. 23. 27. Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited Sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwards, but are within, full of dead Mens bones and all uncleanness.*

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ness. Our first business therefore must be to enquire, whether our insides are clean; or unless they be, an outward cleanliness will avail us nothing at that Day, when God shall judge the secrets of mens hearts.

Secondly, We must examine our Words. Because we must be accountable for these at the Great Day of Judgment; as our Saviour assures us. 12 Mat. 36, 37. *But I say unto you that every idle word, that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the Day of Judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justify'd, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* And surely then it highly concerns us to examine whether we have been guilty of speaking such idle Words, as will infallibly Condemn us at the great and terrible Day of the Lord.

Thirdly, and Lastly, We must examine our Actions. For we very well know, that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or evil. All our Actions must be accounted for at the Last Day; not only our Publick ones, which have been Acted in the Face of the World; but also our most secret ones, which have been done in our Chambers and Closets. God, unto whose Eyes all things are naked and

and open, will bring every thing, even *the most secret thing* into Judgment. And therefore, it stands us in stead carefully to weigh all our past Actions, and try whether they are such as will bear God's severe Examination at the Day of Judgment.

In a Word, we must call our selves to an Account, for all our Thoughts, Words and Actions, before the Bar of right reason, and the Holy Scriptures, which together contain the full Will of God. And we may with assurance conclude, that whatever is agreeable to these, is our Duty: And on the contrary, that whatever thwarts and opposeth these, is certainly Sin. These are that Rule, which if we keep to, we cannot possibly mistake; but we must be careful never to separate these, lest, by so doing, we make only a partial judgment, and deceive our selves.

But I shall not satisfy my self with this General Account of this Duty. I think my self oblig'd to give more particular Directions concerning it, and to put you in a Method of performing it so exactly, that no one Sin shall escape you.

And, in order to this, I would have you Consider, that a Man's Thoughts, Words, and Actions make up that whole Duty, which he owes to God, his Neighbour, and

and himself. And therefore, the only way to know when we have discharg'd our Duty, is to enquire whether our Thoughts, Words and Actions have been such, as they ought to be, towards God, our Neighbour and our selves. And this we shall find out by asking our Consciences such Questions, as shall presently instruct you in.

But, before I do this, it will be very necessary to give you a few Cautions concerning the Examining your self.

First, be not partial to your self in your Examination. But not a better Construction upon your Thoughts, Words and Actions, than they will justly bear. Put rather aggravate your Faults than lessen them: For it will be much more for thy Interest, to think thy self rather worse, than better than indeed thou art. If thou lookest upon thy Sins to be greater then they are, this will only quicken thy Diligence, awaken thy Care, increase thy Sorrow for them, and hasten thy Repentance. But if thou flatter'st thy self, by representing them to thy self to be less than they really are, thy Case will be very miserable. For then thou canst neither be so Sorrowful for them, nor Repent so truly of them, as thou oughtest to do; but thou wilt lay a necessity upon thy self of living in an Impenitent State: For
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so much as thou takest either from the number or bulk of thy Sins, so far will thy Repentance fall short of being such, as it ought to be. Consider, dear Christian, that it is thy own Soul which is now at stake, that no body can suffer by thy misreckoning but thy self, and that, if thou takest not great care to keep true Accompts, thou may'st easily deceive thy self into Eternal Ruine. In a Word, Consider how much safer it is, to be too exact, than to neglect even the least thing; how much more danger there is of Presumption than Despair; and then thou may'st be careless if thou canst.

Secondly, Do not Examine thy self by way of comparison; that is, by comparing thy self with thy Neighbours, and only enquiring whether thou art better or worse than they. It is, God knows, a very common thing, even with the best of us, to say with the proud *Pharisee*, *Lord I am not as this man*: Now, supposing this to be so, yet what is it to the purpose? We shall not be ask'd at the Day of Judgment, whether we were better than our next Neighbours, but whether we have discharged all those Duties, which our own reason and the revealed Will of God oblig'd us to. It will not avail us at that Great Day, to alledge that there

were

were other Men worse than us; For alas! How does this any way excuse our Disobedience, that other Men have been Disobedient as well as we? What would it signify for a Malefactor, when he is upon his Tryal to inform the Judge, that there were other Men to be try'd, who are guilty of much greater Faults than ever he was? Do you think, upon this, the Judge would pronounce him Innocent? Or do you not think, that he would tell him this was no excuse for him, but that there was a settled Law, by which his Actions must be try'd, and by which he must stand or fall? The same is our case. If we can justify our Actions by our Rule, then are we indeed innocent: but if we have nothing else to say for our selves, but that we have not been so bad as other Men, we shall find but a little comfort in this Excuse. Deceive not thy self therefore, O Man, but try all thy Thoughts, Words and Actions, by their proper Touchstones, thine own Reason and God's written Law. If these acquit thee, then thou art indeed acquitted; and if these condemn thee, thou wilt most certainly be condemn'd.

Having premised these two Cautions, I shall now give you some Heads of self Examination; under some one or other of which, every branch of your Duty is contain'd.

Heads.

Heads of Self-Examination.**I.*****Of our Duty towards God.***

HAVE you always firmly believ'd, that there is but One, Eternal, Spiritual, Invisible God, the Fountain of all Perfection and Happiness, who alone made all things both Visible and Invisible, and preserveth and governeth them by his Power and Providence. Have you always believ'd Him to be infinitely Holy, Just, Good, Merciful, Powerful, Wise and True, and that he is every where present? Have you constantly Believ'd in him, Fear'd him, Lov'd Him with all your Heart, Mind, Soul and Strength? Have you given Thanks to Him, and praised Him every Day? Have you put your whole Trust in Him, and firmly depended upon Him? Have you call'd upon Him frequently in his Church, in your Family and Closet? Have you Honour'd his Holy Name and every thing relating to Him? Have you firmly believ'd the Scriptures to be His Word? And have you in all your Thoughts, Words and Actions, endeavour'd conscientiously to Obey His Laws?

II. Of

I I.

Of our Duty towards our Neighbour.

Haft thou lov'd thy Neighbour as thy
 self? Haft thou done unto all Men as you
 would they should do unto you? Haft thou
 lov'd, honour'd, and to the utmost of thy
 Power assisted thy Parents, and Relations?
 Haft thou honour'd and faithfully obey'd
 the King, and all his Ministers, in all their
 Commands, which have not been contrary
 to the Word of God? Haft thou humbly
 submitted thy self to all thy Governours,
 Teachers, and Spiritual Pastors and Ma-
 sters? Have you order'd your self lowly
 and reverently to all your Betters? Have
 you hurt no Body by Word or Deed? Haft
 thou been true and just in all thy Dealings?
 Haft thou bore no Malice or Hatred in
 thy Heart? Haft thou kept thy Hands from
 Picking and Stealing, and thy Tongue from
 Evil-Speaking, Lying and Slandring? Haft
 thou not Tempted thy Neighbour to Intem-
 perance, Wickedness, or Lewdness? Haft
 thou not coveted, or desir'd other Men's
 Goods? But have you learn'd and labour'd
 to get your own Living, and to do your
 Duty towards all Men in that State, in
 which it has pleas'd God to place you.

Of

I I I.

Of your Duty to your self.

Haſt thou had always humble thoughts of thy ſelf, thy Performances, thy Riches, Honour, Wit, Beauty, and every thing elſe belonging to thee? Haſt thou been of a ſedate and eaſie Temper, not given to Peeviſhneſs? Haſt thou conſider'd well of all thy Actions, before thou did'ſt commit them, and haſt thou conſtantly examin'd them, to ſee whether they were done according to God's Laws, after they were done? Haſt thou been contented in thy Worldly Condition, and Diligent and Watchful in thy Station? Haſt thou avoided all Unclean Lewd Thoughts, Words or Actions, and every thing tending to encourage them? Haſt thou been Temperate in thy Meat, Drink, Sleep, and Apparel? Haſt thou avoided Idleneſs and all Unlawful Recreations? Haſt thou ſo us'd thy Body in all things, as to make it moſt ſerviceable to thy Soul? Haſt thou mortify'd it, and kept it down by frequent Faſtings? Or, at leaſt haſt thou never pamper'd it by Exceſs of Meat and Drink, either in Quantity, or Quality?

Thus

Thus must you Question your self concerning your past Thoughts, Words and Actions; and in what particular soever you find you have transgress'd, be sure to take special notice of your faults, in order to your confessing them to God, begging his Pardon for them, and repenting of them.

And this I would have you do every Night, beginning from the time when you first awoke in the Morning, and so going on through the several passages of the Day to the time of your performing this Duty. And, that you may be sure never to omit the Daily Practise of this Duty, always be mindful of these two Things.

First, That the Thoughts, Words and Actions of a Day are many and various, and that our Memories are short and treacherous; and therefore they are not fit to be trusted with a very large Account. It will puzzle very many of us, I believe, to recount the Passages of our Life from Morning till Night; especially it will be difficult to recollect our Thoughts, which being for the most part vain and foolish, rambling and irregular, we have no Method to pursue in taking a review of them. We may possibly from the place where we have been, and the Company we have been in, make some Collection of the Words and

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28. *The DUTIES of the CLOSET.*

Actions of a Day, though a very imperfect one. But we shall find it almost impossible to call to mind our Thoughts, which perhaps have had no connexion with the Place or Company in which we have been. If then it is so difficult a Task to bring back to our View one Day of our Life, how much more difficult will it be, to take an Account of two or three together? If our Memories are so shallow and deceitful that we dare not trust them in our Worldly Concerns, hardly for an Hour, much less for a Day; surely we will not venture to trust them any long while, in our Spiritual Concerns, which are of much more Weight and Importance; in our Spiritual Concerns, where a Mistake may be of very ill Consequence, of no less Consequence than the Eternal Ruin of our Souls and Bodies. Indeed would our Worldly Occasions permit us, there would be reason enough for us to Examine our selves every Hour, nay, to keep a constant Registry of all we think, say, or do. But though this is Impracticable, a Daily Examination of our selves is not. This we may easily do; and this we must do, if we truly and sincerely intend to make such a Reckoning with our selves, as we shall be the better for.

Secondly,

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Secondly, Another reason, why I would never have you let a Day slip without a strict Examination of your self, is because you are not sure that you shall live to perform this Duty the next Day; so that were it possible for us to carry in our Memories the Thoughts, Words and Actions of our Lives, from one Day to another, yet it would be very unsafe to do it. For who knows what a Day may bring forth? Who is there that can assure himself of a Moments continuance in this World? Who but a Fool will venture to say that he will let his Accompts alone till to Morrow; when alas! to Morrow is not in his power, and perhaps he may never Live to see it. Make use therefore of the present Time, and do not dare to put off this Weighty Work, lest by doing so thou should'st provoke God to cut thee off from the Land of the Living, and Time should be to thee no more. Consider with thy self, when thy Bed-time draws near, how uncertain a thing it is, whether thou shalt ever awake in this World again or no. Consider this, I say, and then tell me whether it be not highly fitting for thee, to cast up thy Accompts, and to settle the Affairs of thy Soul; that so, if thy Sleep should prove the Sleep of Death, thou may'st awake with Joy and

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Comfort in the next World, as every good Soul will, which has taken care thus to prepare it self for this sudden Change. But, Lord! what Horror and Confusion will that Man be in, who having put off this necessary Work from Day to Day, finds himself at last depriv'd of all Opportunities of performing it! If therefore thou desirest *to lay thy self down in peace, and sleep*, it will be proper for thee to Examine the State of thy Soul every Night, before thy Bed-time, that so thou may'st acknowledge thy Sins to God, beg his Pardon for them, and sincerely resolve to forsake them. This only can make thy Bed easie and safe, by freeing thee from the troublesome fears of Death, and so preparing thee for it, that, if it should come, it would prove to thee not an Enemy but a Friend.

But, besides this Daily Examination of our selves, we must be careful also to observe some special Seasons, when the performance of this Duty is in a peculiar manner requisite. As,

First, Before the receiving of the Lord's Supper. And for this we have the express Command of God. 1 Cor. 11. 28. *Let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* And the reason of St. Paul's giving us this advice, we

we find in the next Verse 29. *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lords body.* So that here the Apostle supposeth that all such Men, as did not Examine themselves, before they came to the Lord's Supper, would Eat and Drink unworthily when they came thither. And this he might well suppose; for surely no Man can be a fit Guest for the Table of the Pure and Immaculate Jesus, who has not endeavour'd to find out all his spots and blemishes, and to cleanse himself from them. No Man ought to presume to draw near towards the Altar of that God, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, but he who has made it his business to purge and wash himself from his Sins, and thereby has render'd himself fit for God to look upon. Whensoever therefore thou resolvest with thyself to receive the Holy Sacrament, and this thou oughtest to do as often as thou hast an opportunity of receiving it, it will become thee to set apart some time for the performance of this Duty, *and so to search and examine your Conscience, as our Church exhorts us (and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God) that you may come holy and clean to this Heavenly Feast, in the Marriage-Garment requir'd by*

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God in Holy Scripture, and be receiv'd as a worthy partaker of that Holy Table.

Secondly, This Duty is, in a more than ordinary manner, necessary, at such times, as the Church has appointed, for publick Fasting, and Humiliation, and Mortification; especially at *Lent*, when, by the Church's appointment, God's Anger and Judgments are denounc'd against Sinners. At this time certainly it behoves us to Examine our State and Condition, that we may know whether we are of the number of those, against whom God's Judgments are denounc'd, or whether we have been careful to avoid those Sins, which provoke the Wrath of God against all ungodly Men. These times are purposely design'd by the Church, for the improvement of our Souls, and therefore ought to be spent in such Religious Exercises as will promote this Great and Noble End; particularly in such a severe and impartial Examination of ourselves, as will give us a true sight of all our Faults.

Thirdly, Self-Examination is absolutely necessary in times of Trouble and Affliction, whether Private or Publick.

Private Men very often cherish some one darling Sin in their Bosoms, which is the cause of many heavy Judgments that fall upon

upon them. And therefore when they are in distress and perplexity, it will be very proper for them to Examine themselves, and to try whether they can find the cause of this their Trouble within themselves. There is no doubt, but every Man will be able to give himself a good reason for his Afflictions, that seriously considers his own Life. Here we shall certainly find that, which may be a just cause of our Troubles, whether it be really or no. And by finding out this, we shall be put into a way of easing our selves from the burthen of them, by removing that, which in all probability is the cause of them.

But whether this will hold good or no, as to all Private Men, it is hard to say. But it is certainly true of all Communities and Publick Bodies. God never scourgeth them, but for their Sins. *A Righteous Nation shall be exalted*, but Sin not only brings a Reproach, but very often Severe Punishments too, upon any People. In a time therefore of Publick Affliction and Calamity, God does, as it were, call to every particular Member of the Community, to Examine the Course of his Life, and see if he can find any way of wickedness in it. It is certain, that we are afflicted for the multitude of our transgressions, and therefore it

becomes every individual Man of us to Try and Examine how far we are the Causes of these Publick Calamities; that is, to Try how far every one of us either cherisheth in himself, or encourageth in others those Sins, which are the certain Cause of this National Affliction.

At such times as these, *viz.* before we receive the Sacrament; in times appointed by the Church for Fasting, Humiliation and Morrification; and in times of Publick or Private Calamities; we must be very strict in the performance of this Duty. We must be more particular in it, at these times, than in our daily practise of it; and therefore I would not have you use those Heads of Self-Examination now, which I have set down for your Daily use; but I would have you Examine your selves by those particular Heads of your Duty, which you will find at the end of *the whole Duty of Man*. These are so long, that it would take up too much time to overlook them every Night; and therefore I endeavour'd to give you, for your constant use, only an Abstract or Abridgment of them. But at these particular Seasons, you may find time enough to overlook and consider them, as they lie at large. To these I would advise you to add the Creed, commonly call'd the Apostles; at the

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the end of every Article of which I would have you ask your self, whether you firmly and stedfastly believe it. In both these joyn'd together you will find all that is necessary for you to believe and do in order to your Salvation; and by a Serious and Exact View of them, you will easily discover what Faults you have been guilty of, and consequently ought to amend; and what Duties you have discharg'd, as it became you, and consequently ought to persevere in.

Now, that you may not want Encouragements to the performance of this Duty, I will represent to you the many and great Benefits that will certainly follow a Conscientious performance of it; each of which I hope will prove a powerful Motive to Engage you to a constant practise of it.

First, Nothing will so effectually teach us Humility, as a Conscientious discharge of this Duty. For this will every Day show us more and more our own Vileness and Unworthiness. It will give us frequent Instances of the Depravity of our Natures, of our backwardness to all Good, and readiness to all Evil; of the blindness of our Understandings, the perverseness of our Wills, the coldness of our Appetites and Affections towards all Good, and our continual thirsting after forbidden things. It

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will every Day convince us of our Folly in pursuing Shadows, and letting go the Substance; of busying our selves about Trifles, and neglecting the most Weighty Matters. In a Word, we shall, upon Examination, find our selves to be every Day guilty of so much Vanity and Folly, so much Trifling and Impertinence, so much Baseness and Ingratitude, so much Passion and Peevishness, so much Impudence and Prophaneness, so much Sin and Wickedness, that we shall have very great reason to humble our selves even unto the ground, and to look upon our selves, as the most Vile and Despicable Creatures in the whole World. For if a daily sight of our Weakness and Imperfections, our Errours and Mistakes, our Carelessness and Imprudence, will not shame us into a low Opinion of our selves, I know not what will. We need only look into our selves to find Arguments for Humility, and God knows, we afford our selves too many. There is scarce a Thought in our Minds, or a Word in our Mouths, much less any Action, which is not full of Folly and Wickedness; so that we may every one of us justly say, with Holy Job, *I abhor my self, and repent in dust and ashes.*

Secondly, A Daily Examination of our selves will, in all probability, keep us from

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accustoming our selves to any evil Course. When a Man takes no notice of his Actions, but lives without consideration, he is like an ill Husband who never keeps any Accompts, and therefore will be very likely to run into Extravagance. But when a Man, like a prudent and good Husband, keeps his Accompts exact and clear, and has them always in his Eye, it is hardly to be thought he will undo himself by living knowingly and wilfully in such a way as will certainly ruine him. We shall by our daily Examination find out our Faults, when they are young, and easie to be conquer'd; before they have got the Mastery over us, and have made us their Slaves. And sure we shall not meet with any difficulty in resisting a Temptation or leaving a Sin, which is but a Dry old, and consequently cannot have made any very strong Engagement with our Inclinations and Affections. But however, if we do not always leave a Sin upon our first discovery of it, yet I think it will be, morally speaking, impossible to habituate our selves to it, and persist long in the practise of it, when every Night, that comes over our Heads, we shall calmly and deliberately judge it to be a Sin, and consequently dangerous to be persisted in. Few Men, that will take the pains thus frequent-

frequently to Examine themselves, can be suppos'd to have arriv'd to such a Pitch of Wickedness as this is. For their very Examination of themselves, is an owning their Sense of Religion, and the Obligations they lie under to it. This advantage we may therefore justly expect from a constant performance of this Duty, that it will make us walk so warily, that no Temptation shall be able to prevail upon us so often as to make us it's constant Slaves and Vassals; but, if we have the misfortune once or twice to be drawn aside by it, yet our daily Examination will so frequently condemn us for it, and make us so uneasie under it, that it is very reasonably to be hop'd we shall without any great difficulty forsake it, before it gets the Dominion over us.

Thirdly and Lastly, This will afford us Joy unspeakable. For by this frequent Examination of our selves we shall easily know, whether we are indeed the Children of God, and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven or no? And if our Consciences will testify for us, *That in simplicity and Godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our Conversation in the World;* then may we indeed rejoyce, with a reasonable and well-grounded Joy. To these we must appeal, and, if, upon an exact

can be exact and impartial Scrutiny, these acquit us, then are we indeed acquitted. Here alone can we find a Foundation for such True and Inexpressible Joy and Satisfaction, as nothing else in the World can afford us. This was St. Paul's Triumph, That he had a Conscience void of offence towards God and towards man. And if our Consciences will give us the same Testimony, we shall be partakers of the same Triumphant Joy.

But perhaps you will say, that you dare not Examine your self, for fear you should not obtain this Testimony from your Conscience. You know that your Conscience is true, and will accuse as well as excuse you; and therefore you dare not question it, lest it should give you such Answers, as you are very unwilling to hear.

If this be your Case, it is indeed very pitteous, and you have great reason to be concerned, when you think on it; but this still makes the Practise of this Duty more necessary than before. He who is sick, has more need to examine into the state of his Body, than he who is in good health. And he who is oppress'd at Conscience with a heavy Burthen of Sins, has more need to search into it, than he who feels little or no Burthen at all there. The first step towards amendment is the discovery of our Fault; for

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For this lays the Cause of our Distemper before us, and thereby gives us all the opportunity of easing our selves, that we can desire. He therefore that would heal a wounded Conscience, must first enquire what it was that gave his Conscience this Wound; and, having found that out, he may easily apply such Medicines as in due time will work its Cure.

Say not therefore with thy self, O Sinner, that thou knowest thy Conscience will condemn thee, and therefore thou wilt not ask its Verdict. This is a sure way to Eternal Ruine. But resolve thus with thy self, I confess, O Lord, that my Soul is at present in a very bad Condition, defil'd with all manner of Sin, and heavy laden with grief and anguish. What shall I do then? Shall I be afraid to look into it? Alas! Then I shall grow continually worse and worse, and become every Day Ten-fold more the Child of Satan, than I was the Day before. No, I am resolv'd what I will do; I will dive into the very bottom of my Soul, and make a strict search for those Sins, which make me afraid of my self. I will never leave searching till I have found them all out, and when I have found them, I will tear them out by force from my Soul, and never more suffer them to enter in. Then, and not till then, shall

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shall I enjoy a quiet and sedate Spirit, and partake of *that peace of God which passeth all understanding.*

But surely, the pleasure that a Pious Soul must have in looking over its Accompts, is beyond all Expression. How does the Merchant rejoyce, when, upon examination of his Books, he finds all his Affairs to Prosper and Succeed, even according to his Heart's desire? And, if this be matter of such joy to us, What an unspeakable Transport shall we be in, when upon Examination of our Spiritual Accompts, we shall find that we have behav'd our selves so as becometh the *Heirs of Promise.* When our Consciences shall give us this Testimony, that we have *walked worthy of our Vocation,* and shall receive for our Reward *an Eternal Inheritance in the Heavens.* Blessed God! How Infinitely great will the Joy of that Soul be, which, after a strict and impartial search into it self, can safely apply those words of our Saviour to it self, *Well done thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* This is indeed to anticipate and foretaste the Joys of Heaven; it is to make a Heaven upon Earth, and truly and properly to have our Conversation in Heaven whil'st we are here. But, I need say no more to this purpose. The pleasure and satisfaction that every

every good Man has felt in the performance of this Duty, will more powerfully engage him to the constant practise of it, than any thing, which I can say. And the Advantage which all bad Men have found, by a serious and constant Exercise of it, is Invitation enough to any Sinner to set about it.

CHAP. IV.

Of Confession of Sins.

AFTER you have carefully examin'd your self, and have found what Sins you have committed, and what Duties omitted; your next business must be, to make an acknowledgment both of your Sins of Commission and Omission to God.

To confess your Sins is not barely to own to God that you have sinned, and to tell him what Sins you have been guilty of; for alas! He who knoweth all things, has no need of this: But it is to acknowledge your Sins, with a most hearty Shame and Sorrow for them, and a firm Resolution to amend them. He, who makes these the Companions of his Verbal Confession, does truly and properly confess his Sins; but he who satisfyeth himself with a formal telling of
God

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God that he has been guilty of such and such Sins, and thinks that the bare mentioning of them is sufficient, offers to God the *Sacrifice of Fools*, and sadly deceives his own Soul. To own that you have sinned, is to own that you have been a Base and Ungrateful Rebel against God, and that you have done that, which, if you do not repent of it, will sink you into Eternal Misery. And can you do this heartily and sincerely, without taking shame to your self; without being griev'd at your folly that has brought you into this dangerous Condition, and without resolving immediately to get out of it? No certainly, it is in vain for any Man to say, that he doth truly confess his Sins, unless he is thus affected with the Sense of them. He may indeed own them outwardly with his Lips, but this is not that Confession which God requires of us. This outward Confession must be accompanied with the Inward Confession of the Soul; and if this be such as it ought to be, it will show it self by producing in us a most humble Shame, and hearty sorrow for our Sins, and a steadfast Resolution of leaving them.

First, I say, If our Confession be such as it ought to be, *i. e.* If it proceeds from the bottom of our Souls, it will most certainly make us ashamed of what we have done.

Sin

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Sin is a breach of the Laws of God, whom we are bound upon many accounts to Obey, as he is our Creator and Preserver, the Just and Wise Governour of the World, and our continual Friend and Benefactor. And therefore to acknowledge that we have sinned, is to acknowledge that we have been perfidious and unfaithful, *base and ungrateful Wretches*; And is it possible for us to think seriously that we are so, without being ashamed and confounded at it? Is it possible for us sincerely to confess this, and yet to take no Shame to our selves? No surely, it is not. It is meer dissembling with God, to tell him, that we are sensible how vilely and foolishly we have affronted him, and yet at the same time, not so much as to blush at what we say. This plainly discovers that our hearts go not along with our lips, and that we say things which we do not know the meaning of. For to be thoroughly convinc'd that we have done those things which we ought to be very much ashamed of and yet not to be ashamed, is a thing inconsistent. Shame naturally ariseth from a sense of our having done what was not becoming; and therefore where this is wanting, it is justly to be fear'd a due sense of our Faults is wanting too. Holy *Ezra* in his Confession of Sins begins thus, *I am ashamed*

whom I have sinned, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up to the heavens, And thus doth Jeremiah represent the Israelites, confessing their Sins: We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us, for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our Fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God. And thus doth pious Daniel, in his confession of Sins, acknowledg his own and the Peoples shame: O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee. And thus also must we be affected, when we make a Confession of our Sins to God: Our confusion must be continually before us, and the shame of our faces must cover us. We must feel the reproaches of that baseness and dissingenuity, which we own our selves to be guilty of, within us; or else we do not heartily and sincerely acknowledge them.

Secondly, Our Confession must be accompanied with a sorrow for our Sins. If we are truly sensible of the great danger we have brought our selves into by sinning, we cannot help being concerned at it. Grief is nothing else but a discomposure and uneasiness of Mind, occasioned by our feeling that which.

which at present is, looking back upon that which has been, or forward upon that which will most certainly prove hurtful to us. And therefore it is nonsense to say, that we do heartily acknowledge before God, that we are sensible of that great danger which our Sins have brought us into, and yet at the same time to be easie and unconcerned under this sense of Danger. Nay it is Blasphemy to own that we are in a state of Damnation, which every Sinner is who has not Repented of his Sins, and yet to show no sorrow or concern for this our truly deplorable Condition. Hardiness under such circumstances as these, proceeds from want of Sense; and therefore to acknowledge that we have sinned and not to be sorry for it is to show that we know not what sinning means. This is a poor heartless Confession, which will never reach up to Heaven; therefore our Confession of our Sins and our Sorrow for them must go together. These are inseparable Companions, and it is in vain to think of offering up the first to God without the latter. *I will declare mine Iniquity*, saith Holy David, *I will be sorry for my Sins*: And in another place, when he is confessing his Sins, *My sorrow*, saith he, *is continually before me*. And so must ours be too, or else our Confession will be to no purpose.

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Thirdly, It must be accompanied with a steady resolution of leaving our Sins, and performing our Duty better for the future. For when we own that we have sinned, we own that we have done that which is wrong, and consequently ought to be amended; and that which will Eternally Damn us, if it be not repented of. So that, if we are truly sensible of what we say, when we confess our Sins, as we must be if we hope to be accepted by God, we shall feel in our selves a firm Resolution of *amending our ways*, and turning unto *the Lord*. If we do not, our Confession is not sincere; for it is impossible for us seriously to own that we are in such a condition, that, if we do not Repent we shall certainly be Damned, and yet not to think of Repenting.

By these Marks may you know whether your Confession is such, as it ought to be. If you are truly ashamed, and heartily sorry for the Sins which you confess, if you firmly resolve to leave them, and to become better; then is your Confession sincere, and such as God requires. If not, you only shock God, and deceive your self, by an outward Confession of that, which you have no inward sense of.

This Confession of our Sins must be twofold; General and Particular.

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In General, We must acknowledge that we are Naturally inclin'd to do Evil, that there is scarce a Thought in our Hearts which is good; that we are continually violating the Commands of God, and that we have been guilty of very many Sins which have escap'd our notice. In a Word, that our whole Lives have been full of Follies and Wickedness, and that we have thought, said, or done something almost every Moment of them, which was displeasing to God.

In particular, We must confess those Sins, which upon Examination we have found our selves to have been guilty of, of what sort or kind soever they may be. We must acknowledge them at length one by one; that so by a particular enumeration of them, our shame may be encreased, our sorrow enlarged, and our resolution of leaving our Sins, quickned and strengthened.

But it is not enough barely thus to reckon up our Sins, we must be sure to aggravate them also; that is, to show that they have been done with such Circumstances, as make them much worse than simply in their own Nature they are. Thus for instance we must own, not only that we have sinned, but that we have sinned against the clearest light possible, against the most powerful checks

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nd convictions of Conscience, upon the
lightest Temptations, and the poorest in-
ducements that could be offer'd us. Briefly,
we must recollect every thing that will
serve to make us look still baser and baser
in our own Eyes, and to heighten the Fol-
ly and Guilt of our Sins. If any Man de-
sires to receive more particular Instructions
about this matter, he may find them in
Bishop Wilkins's *Excellent Discourse con-
cerning the Gift of Prayer*.

There is one thing more which we must
observe in our Confessions, and that is, to
acknowledge the Punishment which is due
to our Sins. To own that we have behav'd
our selves so, as to deserve the greatest se-
verities from God, that he can inflict upon
us, either in this World, or that which is
to come. And the serious consideration of
these things will very much conduce to the
exciting such Affections in us, as do be-
come the Duty of Confession.

As for the frequency of our Confession,
it ought to be twice a Day at least, viz.
when we offer up our Morning and Even-
ing Sacrifice of Prayer. It has been the
Custom of all Holy Men of Old to usher
in their Prayers to God with a Confession
of their Sins. This has been so constantly
practis'd by all Pious Men, that Confession

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is now look't upon as a part of Prayer, though strictly and properly, as I told you before, it is not so. And this practice of theirs seems to me to have been founded upon extraordinary good Reason. For they thought themselves unworthy to ask any thing of God, till they had humbled themselves before him in a sorrowful Confession of their Sins, and a firm resolution to leave them; and so certainly they were. And this reason has been always thought so good, that this Custom of beginning our Prayers with a Confession of our sins has been continued down even to us; and accordingly our Excellent Church follows this Method in her Publick Service. Whensoever therefore we offer up our Prayers to God in Private, which we must do at least twice a Day, as I shall hereafter have occasion to show you, we must let our Confessions go before us to the Throne of Grace to make way for our Prayers.

The posture which will best become us, in the performance of this Duty, is Kneeling; this being reckoned the most humble posture amongst us, and consequently most fit for this humble Office. Moreover, this was the posture which the Holy Men and Prophets of Old used in the Confession of their Sins. Thus do we read of *Ezra ch. 9.*

ver.

ver. 5. *That he fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, and said, O my God, &c.* And thus did Holy Daniel, as we may read, *ch. 6. ver. 11.* So that if we think that the Prophets of God himself are worthy our Imitation, this is the Posture which will most become us. Let us therefore, as our Church Exhorts, draw near to God, and make our humble Confession to Him, meekly kneeling on our Knees.

I shall not here set down any Form of Confession, but I will direct you to two extraordinary good ones, which are composed according to the above-mentioned Rules. These you will find ready for your use at the latter end of *The whole Duty of Man*, and these I would advise you constantly to keep to.

I will not trouble you with a particular enumeration of all those Benefits and Advantages, which we shall receive from a constant performance of this Duty. There is one so transcendently great, and so much beyond all the rest, that I think I should disparage your Judgments, if I should offer any other to your Consideration. And this is the Promise which is made us. *1 John 1. 9. That if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse*

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cleanse us from all unrighteousness, i. e. If we confess our Sins with a true shame and sorrow for them, and a steady resolution to leave them, God will free us from the punishment of our Sins, and not suffer them to rise up in Judgment against us. This indeed is a Noble Argument to encourage us frequently and sincerely to perform this Duty. Our Sins, *which before were as red as Scarlet,* shall *now become as white as Snow,* and our Pardons shall be sealed to us by the Hand of God himself. So that, if we take care to be true to our Confession, in the following part of our Lives; God will certainly make good his Promise, and will no more remember our Iniquities. Blessed God! O how Infinite art thou in thy Mercies, that sett'st so easie a Ransom upon us. As *Naaman* was commanded by the *Prophet* only to wash and be clean, so are we commanded by our most Gracious God only to confess our Sins, and he has promised to forgive us. O let us hasten then to make sure of this Blessing. Let us prostrate our selves before God, and be heartily ashamed and grieved at our Sins, let us immediately resolve to forsake them, that so our God may delight in us to do us good, and to be merciful to us in the free pardon and remission of our Sins. Behold Lord! We come, we come,
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all covered with shame and confusion, and inwardly possessed with a true hatred of our Sins. *Receive us, O Gracious Father, receive us into the arms of thy mercy; Put away our Sins far from us, and blot us not out of the Book of Life.* Then shall we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and shall feel the efficacy of a sincere and holy Confession.

CHAP. V.

Of PRAYER.

OUR Confessions must be immediately followed by our Prayers, which we may now offer with some sort of *boldness* at the *Throne of Grace*, having in some measure appeas'd our God, who before was angry with us for our Sins, by a sincere and sorrowful Confession of them. And, because it is impossible for us to perform our Duties as we ought, before we thoroughly understand them, I think it will be necessary for us, in order to our understanding and discharging this Duty aright, briefly to enquire into these following particulars.

1. What Prayer is.

2. What we are to Pray for. First, in general, Secondly, more particularly in our Closets.

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3. With what Dispositions of Mind our Prayers must be offered up to God.

4. In whose Name our Prayers must be offered up.

5. Whether it be most adviseable to use a set Form of Prayer in our Closets, or to pray *extempore*, or as some are pleas'd to call it, by the Spirit.

6. How often we must perform this Duty in our Closets.

7. And Lastly, What posture will best become us, while we are offering up our Prayers.

1. *Prayer*, according to the Common Notion and Acceptation of the Word, is a making Suits or Requests to any Person, and upon any account whatsoever. To Request or Sue for a thing, is to ask it in a meek and humble manner, to entreat and beg for it, and not to demand it. It is to ask for a thing in such a modest way, as if the thing, which we ask for, were not our Right and Due, but were to come from the Free Bounty and meer Goodness of Him, to whom we make our Requests. In a Word, it is to ask in such a manner, as may evidently show our Inability to help our selves, and our Entire Dependance upon him, to whom we address our selves, for that thing which we ask of him. Pray-

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er then consider'd at large, is nothing else but an Humble, Modest, and Respectful way of Asking, a Begging or Intreating any thing of any Person whatsoever.

But, consider'd, as it is a Religious Duty, it is only an offering up of Requests to God, and therefore may very properly be said, in St. Paul's Words, *Phil. 4. 6.* to be *a making known our requests unto God.* To Him, and Him alone must we Pray, if we expect our Prayers should be looked upon as truly Religious Prayers. For he allows no Body to share with Him in his Worship; but, as our Saviour tells us, *We must Worship the Lord our God, and him only must we serve.* In all our Necessities we are strictly commanded to have recourse to Him, and no other. *Call upon the Lord, and call upon the Lord your God,* is the common Language of Scripture, but we are no where allow'd, much less commanded, to pay this part of Religious Worship to any other. So that to Pray, in a Religious Sense, is to put up our Requests to God, and God alone.

2. Having stated the Notion of Prayer, it will be needful in the next place to inform you what you are to Pray for, and in order to this, it will be convenient briefly to consider the several parts of Prayer distinctly, which are these Three.

First Petition, or a begging of Blessings and Mercies for our selves, both Spiritual and Temporal.

The Spiritual Blessings which we must pray for are these, Forgiveness of Sins, a true and stedfast Faith in Christ, and Grace to amend our Lives, and to improve in all Vertue and Holiness, and to persevere in them to our Lives end.

The Temporal Blessings, which we must ask for, are all the Necessaries and Conveniencies of this present Life. By Conveniencies, I do not mean what every Man fancieth to be convenient, but what really is so, what is so necessary to our Well-being here, that without it we must be in some degree miserable. Of this Nature are, Health, Friends, Reputation, Abilities, suitable to our several Callings, Liberty, Peace, Food, Rayment, &c. But we must not pray for any of the Luxuries or Superfluities of Life, such as a great Estate, Vast Power and Authority, Mighty Honour and Respect, &c. These, if God pleaseth to bestow them on us, we must thankfully receive, but we must not presume to ask for them. Our Saviour alloweth us only to ask for our *daily Bread*: i.e. for all things necessary for our Comfortable Support and Sustenance in this present Life.

Secondly,

Secondly, A second part of Prayer is *Intercession*, or a begging Blessings and Mercies for other Men. We must pray for all Men, not only our Governors, Parents, Friends, Relations and Benefactors (though these indeed we must pray for in a more especial manner) but also for our very Enemies; for thus has our Lord Commanded us to pray for those *that despightfully use us. Matth. 5. 24.* And the Blessings which we ask for these, must be likewise Spiritual and Temporal.

1. Spiritual, if they are *Turks, Jews, Infidels, or Hereticks*, we must beg of God, to forgive their Errors, and to bring them to the knowledg of the Truth, to Enlighten such of them as are in Darkness, and to Convert such as are in Sin. If true Christians, we must beseech God to Pardon their Sins, to give them Grace to repent of them, and to amend their Lives, to do their Duties diligently in their several Callings, and to hold fast their most Holy Faith.

2. Temporal, The very same Temporal Blessings, which we asked for our selves, must we ask for them also. Our Saviour does not bid us, when we Pray, to say, *Give me my daily Bread, but give us our daily Bread*, whereby he plainly shews us, That we must ask the same Temporal Ble-

sings for all other Men that we do for our selves; he himself having put us all together in one Petition.

Thirdly, The last part of Prayer is *Deprecation*, or a beseeching of God to divert Evils both from our selves and other Men. Thus our Saviour bids us pray, in his most admirable Form of Prayer, *Deliver us from Evil*. By Evil is meant principally Sin, which is indeed the only true Evil of Man; and in the next place, all those Torments, Pains, Troubles, Disquietudes, Vexations, and Uneasinesses, which Sin was the first cause of. So that to pray to be delivered from Evil, is to pray that God would keep us from being made Slaves to Sin, and from the Punishment that is due to it, and also from all Pains, Crosses, Troubles and Afflictions in this World, which may in some sense be called Evils.

This, in General, must be the subject matter of all our Prayers, in our Churches, our Families and our Closets. We must not at any set time of Prayer, ask less than this, either for our selves or other Men. If we do, our Prayers will be Lame and Imperfect, and unfit to be offer'd to that God, who requires a perfect Sacrifice at our Hands.

But in our Closets we must not content
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our selves with such a general performance of this Duty; we have there an opportunity of being more particular in our Prayers, than in Publick we could possibly be, and therefore we must not think to put God off with general Requests, but we must nicely enquire into our own and other Mens particular Wants, and put up particular Prayers for a supply of them.

Thus for instance, we must not think it enough to beseech God in General to forgive our Sins, but we must reckon up our particular Transgressions, and consider which are our most common and most heinous Sins, and then in an especial manner beg Pardon for them. We must not satisfie our selves with asking God in general to give us his Grace, but we must reflect upon our selves and see what particular Graces we want most, whether Faith, Love, Hope, Humility, Zeal, Sincerity, or the like; and having found out which of all these we stand in greatest need of, we must particularly Address our Prayers to God for it. In what particular Point soever we find our Souls weak, there especially must we beg of God to supply our ittengh.

The same may be said as to our Temporal Concerns. If we are well in all respects, and have no particular want, then a general

Prayer to God to continue us in our Condition may be sufficient ; but if we are oppressed with Sickness, forsaken by, or bereav'd of our Friends, abus'd in our Reputations, weak in our Abilities, depriv'd of our Liberty, perplex'd by ill Men, or destitute of the Conveniencies of Life. If we are under any of these, or such like particular pressures, it will become us in a particular manner, to beg of God to administer proper Relief to us, and to ease us especially from that particular Burthen, with which we are oppress'd.

And the same Method must we follow in our Intercessions for others : If any of our Governors, Parents, Friends, Relations, Benefactors, nay, or our very Enemies have been drawn into any Notorious Sin, or manifestly stand in need of any Spiritual Grace or Good, it will be our Duty to beseech God, in a particular manner, to pardon the former, and to bestow upon them the latter.

Again, if we know any of them to be in Sickness, Need, Trouble, or any other Adversity, we must be sure to make particular mention of them in our Private Prayers, and to beg of God, that he would supply their particular Wants.

Thus likewise in our Deprecations, if
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any Evil seems to be very near any of us, and plainly threatens us, we must particularly pray against it, in a more especial manner than we do against any other Evil.

And the reason why we should be thus particular in our Private Prayers is very plain, *viz.* Because God has no where promis'd us to give us any thing, but what we ask for. He has been pleas'd to make asking the Condition of Receiving, and making our Wants known, the Condition of having them supplied; not that he needs to be told what we want; for this he knows much better than we can tell him; but asking is a sort of Homage which He requires of us his Creatures, and without it we have no reason to expect any thing we stand in need of. When therefore we have time and opportunity to lay open our particular Wants before our Heavenly Father, as we have in our Closets, He will most undoubtedly expect it from us; and if we omit the doing of it, I see no reason why we should hope to receive from God any Relief or Supplies suitable to our particular needs. Our Church it self, even in her Publick Prayers, takes a great deal of care to be as particular as possibly She can; and though She cannot possibly mention every particular Man's Wants by themselves; yet
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in several Cases she has order'd that a particular mention should be made of them. And surely if the Church endeavours so much to be particular in her Publick Prayers, we who have all opportunities of being more particular in our Private Prayers, should not neglect being so. *David* in several places makes particular mention of his most heinous Sins, and begs particular Pardon for them. Thus in the 51 *Psalms* he beseeches God at large to pardon his Sins of Murder and Adultery; and in the same *Psalms* particularly prays for some Spiritual Blessings, which he then stood in greatest need of, such as Purity of Heart, and Inward Joy and Comfort. And thus *St. Paul* tells *Timothy* 2. 1, 3. That he always made particular remembrance of him in his Prayers; and thus likewise in another place he assures *Philemon*, That he always made mention of him in his Prayers, as he tells us he did also of the *Romans*, the *Ephesians*, and the *Thessalonians*. Thus did Holy *Abraham* in Private intreat God to divert those Judgments which he had threatned the *Sodomites* withal, *Gen.* 18. 23. And thus did *Moses* particularly pray against those Judgments which were just ready to descend upon the Children of *Israel*, because they had turned aside out of the way which God commanded them,

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them, and had made them a Molten Calf, as you may read, Exod. 32. 11. Nay thus did our Blessed Saviour himself, when he was praying in Private, and had some foretaste of those grievous Sufferings which he was just about to undergoe: Thus I say did he beseech God in a particular manner, *That if it were possible, that cup might pass from him.* Thus you see, these Holy Men did not think it enough, to offer up general Prayers to God, but having opportunity to be particular in their Requests, they were so. For themselves they especially begg'd such Blessings, as they stood in greatest need of. Of others they made particular mention in their Prayers; and they were careful particularly to pray against those Evils which more immediately threatned themselves or others. Let us not then satisfy our selves with asking Blessings of God in general only, but let us lay open our particular cases before him, which unless we do when we have opportunity, I cannot promise that God will take notice of them. And thus much shall suffice to show what we are particularly to pray for in our Closets. I come now

Thirdly, to show with what Dispositions of Mind our Prayers must be offered up to God, and they are these following.

First,

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First, Humility, This the very Notion of Prayer includes in it; for Prayer, as I told you before, is nothing else but an humble way of asking. He that asks for any thing without Humility, cannot properly be said to pray for it, but to demand it, not to beg it as a Favour, but to challenge it as a Debt. But this way of asking will very ill become us, who are needy and dependent Creatures, always in want, and always unable to supply our least wants: Us, who are poor helpless Creatures, sustained, by the free Bounty and Mercy of God, and incapable of obtaining any thing, but what his Goodness pleaseth to bestow upon us. If we expect that our Prayers should be heard, we must offer them up with an humble Heart, deeply sensible of its own Poverty, and fully convinced of its own Inability to gratifie its Desires, even in the least thing which they thirst after. If we come to God, with such a deep and humble Sense of our poor and mean Condition, then will our Prayers be acceptable unto him, then he himself has assured us, that *he will look down from Heaven and hear us. For he forgetteth not the cry of the humble, but hears their desire.* But if we are puffed up in our proud Hearts, and think that we have little or no need of God, it will be best for us then to
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forbear offering up any Prayers to him, for they will be an *abomination unto him*; for *he respecteth not the proud*, but will scatter them in the *Imagination of their Hearts*.

Secondly, Attention, Prayer is the Business of the Soul, and he who reads the Words of a Prayer, and lets not his Heart go along with his Words, can be no more properly said to Pray, than he who is reading

Play or a Romance: And yet alas! we have too much reason to fear, that this is all the praying that many People make. It is, God knows, too common a Fault, to satisfy our selves with a *calling upon God with our lips*, though *our hearts are never so far from Him*, and to think we have performed our Duty, when we have said our Prayers, whether we regarded one Word we said or no. But this is all a sad Cheat upon our selves; and if we take not timely care to correct our mistake, we shall, when it is too late, find how miserably we have deceived our selves. The Heart is the Spring from whence proceed all our Desires and Petitions; our Words are only outward Expressions of our Hearts, and though to Men, who can guess at our Thoughts only by what we say, they may make known our Requests, yet to God they signify nothing, unless they are the Inward Language of the

the Soul, as well as the Outward Language of the Lips.

Thirdly, We must pray with a sincere design to make a right use of those Blessings which we pray for. If we ask for Spiritual Blessings, only to make a Show and Boasting of them, to feed our own vain Glory and Pride, and not to make use of them, as they were intended by God, for the Promotion of his Honour, and the Salvation of our Souls, we must not expect to obtain them. Or, if we ask for Temporal Blessings, with a design to serve some ill end by them, we must not think it hard, if God does not think fit to answer our Prayers. *Ye ask and receive not, saith St. James, Because ye ask amiss; that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* God knows and regards the Intention of the Asker, and therefore we must take care, that our Designs in asking may be always such, as will be well pleasing in his sight. If not, we shall ask amiss, and shall not receive.

Fourthly, We must pray with Faith, not doubting in the least but that God can and will answer our Requests, if he thinks fit. St. James tell us, *Ch. 1. ver. 6.* That we must *ask in faith, nothing wavering.* He who asks without Faith, prays without a right Sense of God upon his Mind, and there-

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therefore cannot in reason hope to have his Prayers heard. Faith is the Foundation of Prayer, because we believe that there is a God who can and will help us, therefore we pray unto him; but unless we are possess'd with such a Faith as this, there is no reason why we should pray. To the Prayer of Faith God has made a Promise that it shall be effectual, *The Prayer of Faith shall save the Sick*. But he who prayeth without Faith, calls either God's Power or Veracity in question, and is not like to receive any Benefit from his Prayers.

Fifthly, We must pray with Fervency. A cold Lukewarm Prayer is just next to none at all, next to our not desiring a thing is our being indifferent whether we obtain it or no; and therefore if we show any Coldness or Indifferency in our Prayers to God, he will be as cold and indifferent as we. He has been graciously pleas'd to promise that *fervent Prayer shall avail much*; but he hates those who are *neither cold nor hot in their Prayers*: If we are thus *lukewarm*, he will *spue us out of his Mouth*, and be so far from giving us what we ask, that he will severely punish us for this manner of asking.

Sixthly and Lastly, We must ask with an entire resignation to God's Will, firmly resolv'd

resolv'd that we will be contented and well-pleased, if he should not think fit to grant our Requests. Thus prayed the Blessed Jesus, *Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*; and thus also must we pray, We may ask for any of those Blessings which I have before directed you to pray for, but still with submission to the Divine Will. If God in his Infinite Wisdom think fit to bestow them upon us, we must most gladly receive them; but if he judgeth it best for us to be without them, we must be contented to be so. *Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*, must be the conclusion of all our Prayers. God knows infinitely better than we our selves, what is good for us, and therefore to his wise Providence we may safely, nay we are in all reason bound to commit our selves.

These are those Holy Dispositions of Mind which God requires in all those who ask any thing of him. I should have added to these a firm resolution of Mind to leave our Sins, and become better; for without this all our Prayers will be ineffectual. But this I told you before, you must be sure to put on in the Confession of your Sins, before you presume to ask any thing of God, and therefore I think it needless to say

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and more of it here. Let us then proceed to consider.

Fourthly, In whose Name all our Prayers must be offered up. We, of our selves, are such vile and base Wretches, *That we are not worthy so much as to lift up our eyes towards Heaven.* For we know, as St. John saith, *Ch. 9. ver. 31.* that *God beareth not Sinners*; and therefore we, consider'd in our selves, are utterly unfit to pray to him: *But the Lamb of God which hath taken away the Sins of the World*, hath made way for us to the *Throne of Grace*; he hath purged us from those Sins, which before were as a thick Mist between us and Heaven; and by his most pretious Blood hath purchased and redeem'd our forfeited Privilege of calling upon God. In his Name therefore must all our Suits and Requests be put up; and in his Name, and for his sake they shall be accepted. This he himself assures us, *John 14. 13, 14.* *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do. If ye ask any thing in my Name I will do it.* And again, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you.* When therefore thou hast any Request to offer up to God, be sure to remember that of thyself thou art unworthy to offer it up, and therefore let it be put up in the Name of
Jesus.

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Jesus Christ our Saviour, for the alone sake of whose Worthiness God will vouchsafe to hear our Petitions.

Fifthly, I now come to that Question, Whether it be most adviseable to use Extemporary Prayers, or a Set Form, in the Closet. And here I cannot forbear owning that, as I am an utter Enemy to Extemporary Prayer in Publick, so I am also in Private. For although we cannot urge all those Arguments against it in Private, which forbid it in Publick, yet I think there is enough to be said against the use of it, even here, to perswade every reasonable Man to forbear it. As,

First, Let us consider how few Men there are in the World, that are able to frame a Regular and Compleat Prayer, even when they studiously and deliberately set about it. And how then can we expect that we shall be able to do that without Study or Deliberation, and in a moment, which we cannot do even when we apply our selves with Care and Diligence to it? How Lame and Imperfect must the sudden Prayers of those Men be, whose most mature and well-digested Thoughts can produce nothing that is worthy the Sacred Name of Prayer, nothing which they themselves can think fit to offer up to God?

Secondly,

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Secondly, How few are there, even of those Men, who with Study and Deliberation are able to compose a compleat Prayer, that can do it suddenly, and in an instant, without any previous Thought or Meditation. It would perhaps puzzle the most ready Man we have, to make such a Prayer on a sudden, as should not be deficient in any part of it. Or, supposing we could find some Men that are able to do this, yet sure they will not pretend that they can compose a Prayer, as good in every respect on the sudden, as they can when they have time for thinking allowed them. To make a general Prayer, which shall answer all our Wants and Occasions, and shall place every thing in that just Method, which its Order requires, must be a work of Time and Thought.

Since then there are some Men who are in no wise able to make a Prayer; and since those who are able, yet cannot do it on a sudden, at least cannot do it so well, as when they take time, and set about it with thoughtfulness; we cannot but conclude that it is necessary both for the one and the other to use a Set Form of Prayer; in which they may ask of God all those things they stand in need of, in such a decent Manner and orderly Method, as will be most acceptable to him. Add

Add to this, that a Set Form of Prayer is a great help to Attention, whereas extraordinary Prayer perfectly perplexeth and distracteth the Mind. How is it possible that Men should ever attend to their Prayers as they should do, when their Minds are full of the Thoughts of what they shall say next, and their chief Care is to say something, though they do not well know what. When things that ought to come first shall be put last, and the last first, and all shall be in such a sad Confusion, that we shall not know when we have said enough, or what it becometh us to say more. What a hurry, I say, must a Man's Mind be in, in this case, and how incapable will he be of praying with that Attention which God expects from us. Besides, every now and then, it is probable the World will step in and interrupt his Thoughts, while they are in this wild and loose Condition. But now a Set Form of Prayer prevents all this. We need not here trouble our selves about what we shall say next, for we know beforehand, that all things necessary are here set down in a most decent and fitting Order. We have no other business but to fix our Minds upon what is ready prepared for us, and how much easier this is than to invent always New Prayers of our own, and

to offer them up with due Attention, I leave to any Man's Judgment to determine who has ever try'd both ways.

But here I am sensible I shall meet with two Objections against a Form of Prayer, which I think it will be no hard matter to answer.

First, Some Men are against a Form of Prayer, because they say it is a stinting of the Spirit. They confess indeed, that of themselves, they are unable to frame any Prayer that is fit to be presented to God; but they think they have the Spirit of God, and that, they are sure, speaks the Language of Heaven. Set Forms therefore may be still as useless; for the Spirit has no occasion for them. They know no reason, how they are by themselves, why they should be kept up to a Form, but the Spirit they think may have free utterance.

It is very much to be fear'd that many of those Men who talk of the Spirit at this rate, do not well understand what the Spirit means. They have got a Canting way of Talk from some Conceited Men, and like Mag-Pyes they chatter it by roat, but know not what they say. Had God Almighty been pleas'd to promise us, as he did the Apostles, that the Holy Ghost should teach us what we should say, When we enter'd into our

our Closets, I should be as much against the Forms of Prayer of our own making, as I am now for them. But alas! We have nowhere any such Promise. The ordinary assistance of God's Spirit we shall never want if we heartily seek it, and use it well where we have it. But I know no reason we have to expect such an extraordinary measure of the Spirit, as the Apostles had, without which we must not pretend to this Gift of Extemporary Prayer. I am very sure did these Men but examine their own sudden and unpremeditated Prayers, they would very often find them to be such miserable Stuff, that they would not dare to be so Prophane; as to think them the Language of the Holy Spirit.

A Second Objection comes from those Men who are against a Set Form of Prayer because there is no Variety in it, they are unwilling to be so strictly ty'd up, and would fain have the Liberty of changing often, that they may not be wearied out with the dull Repetition of the same Prayers continually.

This is a very Poor and Weak Objection, and is an Argument rather of an Humorous and Nice, than of a truly Devout, and Religious Spirit. However I shall endeavour to satisfy these Men as far as I can. Let

such

which therefore know that there is no need
 they should be so closely confin'd to one
 form in their Closets, as they must ne-
 cessarily be in the Church. There are several
 excellent Books of Private Prayers which
 they may use, taking sometimes one, and
 sometimes another, as they themselves
 shall think fit: And this I think is variety
 enough. I only desire to lay a restraint
 where our Lord himself has laid one, and
 to command Men, as He did, That when-
 ever they pray, they say his most Excellent
 prayer, *Our Father which art in Heaven,*
&c. There are a great many good Set
 forms of Private Prayer of several Authors;
 Men will keep to some of these, this is
 all I contend for, let them choose which
 of them they please, and change as often
 as they shall think fit. Only let them for-
 bear this rambling and irreverent way of
 praying *Extempore*, and I am satisfied.
 And since there are already so many Excel-
 lent Prayers for Private use, I hope I shall
 be pardoned if I omit the inserting any of
 my own here. But if you will give me
 leave to recommend such as I most approve,
 I shall persuade you to use those at the
 End of the *Whole Duty of Man*, and those
 of the Right Reverend Dr. *Patrick* in his
Book of Prayers.

Sixthly, As to the frequency of our Prayers, it is very hard, nay impossible, to give any certain universal Rule in this case, because Mens Circumstances in this World are very unlike, some being Rich and Masters of their own Time, and so having a great deal of Time to spare; others Poor and continually engaged in such necessary Employments, as take up almost all their Time. However in general I shall lay down these following Rules, which will reach Men of every State and Condition.

I. That we should be as frequent in Prayer as we can, that is, as our necessary Worldly Business, and the other Duties of Religion, will permit us to be. In Scripture we are commanded to *continue in Prayer, to pray always and not to faint, to pray without ceasing, &c.* Which Texts, although they are not to be understood in a Literal Sense, yet they certainly oblige us to a frequent performance of this Duty. They at least enjoin us to spend that Time, which now we often fling away idly, in the Worship of God. And there is scarce any Man, but those of the very lowest Condition, for whom this Book is not designed, who has not some idle Time, some Time which is spent even in doing nothing, or what is worse, doing ill. The least there-
fore

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more we can do, is to devote this Time to God's Service. And if Men would generally observe this Rule, God would have a great deal more of their Time, than he now has.

2. No Man should ever pass a Day without offering up his Sacrifice of Prayer twice to God, in the Morning and in the Evening. This at least our Reason seems to require of us. In the Morning our Bodies, as it were, are Created anew, and stand in fresh need of God's sustaining Hand, and therefore it now becomes us to Address our selves to Him, as our Saviour directs us, for our *Daily-Bread*, that is, for such Necessaries of Life as He has made us stand in need of, by giving us a new Day. At Night we lie down in our Beds, and know not whether it may not be in our Graves also. We are sure that we shall never awake more in this World, without God's permission, and that if we awake in the other without His Favour, We shall be Eternally miserable. Now then it surely behoves us to beg His gracious Protection and merciful Kindness, that so, whether we awake any more in this World, or sleep the sleep of Death, we may be sure of His Favour, and then we shall not fail of being Happy.

Add to this, that none of the Holy Men we read of in Scripture were less frequent

in their Private Prayers than this. *Evening, and Morning, and at noon will I pray and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice* faith Holy David. And of Daniel we read *That he kneeled down in his chamber, and prayed three times a Day.* And in Imitation of them, it would very well become us who have time to spare, to pray three times a Day likewise; but we must be sure never to fail of offering up our Private Prayers, every Morning and Evening.

3. Besides these constant Seasons of Prayer, there are others which are purely accidental; as times of Affliction, Holy-days, Fasts, &c. *Call upon the Lord in the time of trouble,* faith David. When any Calamity or Affliction oppresseth thee then you need not stay for your set time of Prayer, but run immediately to God for help, and beg his comfortable assistance. Holy-days and Fasts are purposely designed for the promotion of Piety and Devotion, and therefore on these Days, besides our Ordinary Devotions, we must have some Prayers which more immediately relate to the Day, and we must spend more time in our Prayers, on such Days, than we generally do on other Days. There are Days set apart more peculiarly for God's Service, and as such, must be observed by us in our Closets.

If Men are careful to observe these Rules, they shall have no reason to complain that they do not perform this Duty of Prayer so frequently as they should do. If they bear a Conscientious regard to the first Rule, they cannot fail of Praying often; and if they omit this, and mind only the two last, they will still pray much oftner than now they do.

Seventhly, The Bodily Posture always to be used in Prayer, both Private and Publick, is Kneeling. Of this there can be no Dispute, because we have an expresse Command of God for it. Thus *Psalms* 95. 6. *Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker.* And agreeable to this Command was the Practice of all Holy Men of Old, nay, and our Blessed Saviour himself, of whom we read *Luke* 22. 41. that when he had withdrawn himself from his Disciples, and went to pray privately to his Father, *He kneeled down and prayed.* If then our Saviour's Example be worthy of our Imitation, and God forbid any of us should be so prophane as to say it is not, Kneeling is that Posture of Body which we must always use, when we offer up our most Private Prayers.

Thus have I briefly run over the several Heads, which I at first proposed to speak to. But I cannot conclude this Chapter,

without inviting you to a frequent performance of this Duty, from a prospect of those many Advantages which will flow from it. As,

1. If you pray according to all the Rules before laid down, in all probability you will obtain what you pray for. I say, in all probability, because it may possibly sometimes happen that God may deny you what you ask for, for some Wise and Good Reason unknown to you, even when you do not ask amiss. But generally speaking you shall not be disappointed of your hopes but your Prayers shall be answered. But if you never pray at all, or pray not in this manner which God has prescribed, you have no reason to expect even the most trifling thing you want. To them that ask thus, God has promised that they shall have, but He has nowhere promised to bestow any thing on them, who do not pray to Him.

2. If your Petitions are not Answered, you will still have this to comfort you, that it is not for want of your performance of this Duty. He that is in want, and never prays as he should do to have his wants supplied, may thank himself for them. But the good Man, who performs this Duty Conscientiously, whether his Prayers are answered

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answered or no, has this to satisfy his Mind with, that his misery does not proceed from his neglect of his Duty, but that God in his Wisdom thinks fit not to give him what he asks for, and therefore he can quietly and contentedly bear his want.

3. Whether our Prayers meet with their reward in this World or no, they will certainly not go unrewarded in the next. God has engaged his Truth for this, and therefore we need not doubt of it. He has promised us, That if we thus *pray unto him in secret, he will reward us openly.* He will at the great Day of Retribution, however He may think fit to deal with us in this World, before the Face of Men and Angels, and all that great Assembly which shall be then present, show us that he has heard our many Pious Prayers, by rewarding us for them with an Eternity of Happiness. Whatever Disappointments therefore we may meet with, by not having our Prayers answered in this World, yet still we will not be discouraged. We know O Lord, that thou art faithful who hast promised, and therefore though thou dost not reward our Prayers with Temporal Blessings, yet thou wilt give us that, if we ask as we ought to do, which we chiefly ask for, even Eternal Life and Glory.

C H A P. VI.

Of THANKSGIVING.

WE must always close up our Prayers with a Thanksgiving to God. For so he himself commands, *That we should give thanks for all things, and with our Prayers and Supplications offer up our Thanksgivings also.* Phil. 4. 6.

To give God Thanks is to acknowledge with a Heart truly sensible of God's great Goodness towards us, the many Blessings and Mercies which He hath from time to time conferred upon us, to own that Infinite Mercy and Kindness which He continually manifests towards us, and to Bless and Praise his Name for them. And though this is but a poor return for those many Favours which we receive from God, yet He, out of his great Love and Condescension to us, has been graciously pleased to assure us, that He will kindly accept it at our Hands.

Our Thanksgiving must be twofold General and Particular.

In General, we must thank God for all those Blessings which we enjoy in common with

with other Men ; as our Creation after God's own Image ; the Redemption of the World by Christ ; the offer of the assistance of God's Holy Spirit to all such as earnestly desire, and heartily endeavour to obtain the Kingdom of God ; the manifestation of God's Will, and the Promises of Eternal Life and Glory to all those who embrace the Gospel, and live according to it, our continual Preservation, and all the Temporal Blessings which we enjoy in this Life, and which others enjoy as well as we.

In Particular, we must give God Thanks for all those Blessings which he has in a particular manner bestowed upon us, whether they be Spiritual or Temporal.

First, Spiritual ; as that he has caused us to be born of Christian Parents, by whom we were brought up in the true Religion, and so had not those Prejudices to conquer, before we could come to the knowledge of the Truth, which those poor Souls have who are ill Principled at first ; that he has many times, by his Grace, kept us from yielding to the Temptations of Sin, and that when we have sinned, He has been so Merciful as to afford us time to Repent of our Sins, and to make our Peace with Him. In a Word, we must Thank Him for all those particular Means of Improving our

selves in Vertue and Goodness, which we have enjoyed beyond many other Men; whether by being Born of more Vertuous Parents, more Religiously Educated, living where we have had better Examples set before us, receiving a larger Measure of God's Grace, or being better disposed, by our Natural Tempers of Body, to Vertue and Religion than many other Men. For these and several such like Blessings, which it is impossible to reckon up, must we offer up our particular Thanks to God, who has so kindly bestowed them upon us.

Secondly, There are likewise many Temporal Blessings, which several of us enjoy, in a greater and more plentiful measure than many other of our Fellow-Creatures: As Riches, Honour, Reputation, Friends, Liberty, Peace, Health, Wit, Beauty, or the like. Many of us have had a great number of particular Deliverances from some eminent Danger, all of us some. So that we shall all meet with frequent occasions of blessing and magnifying the Name of God in a most particular manner, especially those of us, whom out of his own meer Goodness and Favour, He has placed in much better Worldly Circumstances, than many others of our Brethren.

But we must never fail, every Morning,

to

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to return our most hearty Thanks and Praise to God, for his care of us the Night before; for the refreshing Sleep which He gave us, his Protection of us from all dangers, whether of Fire, Thieves, &c. but above all, for his permitting us once more to behold a new Day, whereby we have some farther time for Repentance graciously allowed us.

At Night also you must be sure to call to mind all the Mercies of the fore-going Day. Consider with thy self what particular Sins God has kept you from committing, and what good He has enabled you to do; what success you have had in your Worldly Affairs, and what especial Deliverances of any sort you have met with that Day. And for these Mercies you must offer up your most particular Thanks.

But it would be endless to reckon up all those Mercies for which we are obliged to bless and praise God's Holy Name. *If I should count them, as holy David saith, they are more than the sands of the Sea.* He who receives fewest Mercies from God, has yet received enough to imploy his whole Life in praises to Him. *Bless the Lord therefore, O my Soul, and forget not all his benefits. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy*
life

life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles. Who executeth righteousness and judgment to all that are oppressed. Who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. Who dealeth not with us after our iniquities, but pitieth us, even as a father pitieth his children, Bless the Lord therefore, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His holy name. This was the Language of the holy David, and this is that Language which God expects from all that Love and Honour Him.

Now it will mightily help to quicken our Gratitude towards God, and to enspirit and enlarge it, if, before we offer up our Thanks, we use our selves always seriously to reflect upon God, who is the Author and Fountain of all Mercies, and upon our selves, who are the unworthy Receivers of them.

First, Let us consider that He who bestoweth these Blessings upon us, is no less a Person than the Great, Eternal and Ever-Blessed God. So that if the Greatness of the Person who gives, increaseth the value of the Gift, as it most certainly does, then those Gifts which come from God
must

must be infinitely more valuable than any other, and consequently deserve our loudest Thanks and Praise. That the Great and High God should condescend so far as to take any notice of us, is such an exceeding great Mercy as we can never be thankful enough for. Upon this Consideration David breaks forth, in the 113 Psalm, into these Expressions of Praise. *Blessed be the Name of the Lord from this time forth, and for evermore. From the rising of the Sun unto the going down of the same, the Lords Name be praised. The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the Heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God who dwelleth on high? Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in Heaven and Earth. He raiseth up the poor, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghil. That he may set him with Princes, even with the Princes of his People. He maketh the barren Woman to keep House, and to be a joyful Mother of Children.* David thought it such an instance of kindness and condescension in the Great and Mighty God, to look down upon this lower Word, that he thought he could never praise Him enough for it.

Besides, as God is infinitely above us, so also is he quite out of a capacity of receiving

receiving any advantage from us. He neither stands in need of, nor hopes for any returns of kindness from us, but out of his own free bounty and goodness makes his Sun to shine upon us. Men very often are kind to us more for their own sakes than ours, designing by some small favours to us, to purchase a greater from us to themselves, and therefore such favours as these do not much deserve our Thanks. But God is utterly incapable of receiving any advantage from the favours which he bestoweth upon Men. They all flow from pure love and goodness, and are dispensed with no other design, but to make the whole Creation happy. Oh! what infinite goodness is this? that the All-sufficient God, who can receive no benefit from any of his Creatures, should be continually sending down Blessings upon them, and labouring to make them happy. How shall we enough admire the *length* and *breadth*, and *height* and *depth* of that Divine Love, which eagerly strives, without any motive but its own Goodness, to make us Men partakers of Eternal Felicity? O my Soul, how canst thou ever hope to be thankful enough for this unspeakable Love? If thou should'st spend all thy Days in one Act of Praise and Thanksgiving, it would all come short

hort of what thou owest to thy God. Grudge him not then a small portion of thy time, but rejoyce when thou hast an opportunity of offering up thy Thanks to him, and greedily lay hold on it.

But *Secondly*, Our gratitude will still rise to a higher pitch, if we consider farther what we our selves are who receive these Blessings from God. But oh! I tremble to say what Wretches we are. We are Sinners, base and vile Sinners, Rebels against God, Despisers of his Authority, Transgressors of his Commands, and careless of his Honour, the most contemptible of all Creatures, and most odious in the sight of God. And yet notwithstanding all this, he is graciously pleased to take care of us, and to preserve us by his Mercy and Goodness. Blessed God! How Infinite art thou in thy Mercies, how kind even to those who most prophanely and impiously affront thee? *What is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou so regardest him?* What indeed is he but a base, treacherous and ungrateful Creature? And yet thou usest him as if he were the most Obedient, Faithful, and best deserving Creature in the World. Should an injured Prince deal thus with his Rebellious Subjects, how

how would they admire his Mercy, and praise his Love? Oh how shall we then be thankful enough for Gods Mercies to us, who have used him much worse than ever any Subjects did their Prince, and yet continually receive greater Blessings from him than any Earthly Power can give. How should our Mouths over-flow with Thanks and Praise, when we consider that our kind and gracious God, repays all our injuries with Kindnesses, and all our affronts with Blessings. If this will not melt down our hard hearts into thankfulness, I know not what will. If the Considerations of Gods Infinite Condescension and Free Goodness, to us vile and miserable Wretches, who are continually abusing and provoking him, will not kindle in Mens hearts a lively sense of Gods Mercy towards them, and fill their Mouths with Praises and Thanksgivings, I utterly despair of urging any thing else that will.

Were we sure then that no benefit would redound to us from our Thanksgivings, yet it would be our unquestionable Duty, frequently to offer them up to God. But we want not encouragements to the performance of this Duty, for the benefits that it will procure for us will be very great. For,

First,

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First, This is the most acceptable Sacrifice we can offer up to God, and therefore will be a likely means of procuring his Favour. *Offer unto God Thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most high, for this is much better pleasing in his sight than the flesh of Bulls and the blood of Goats. Whose offereth me praise, glorifieth me, saith God. When we sacrifice the sacrifices of Thanksgiving, and declare Gods work with rejoycing,* then is our Offering such as he delights in.

Secondly, Thankfulness, for those Blessings which we have already receiv'd, will go a great way in procuring for Us those which we stand in need of, and pray for. When God sees that Men have a right sense of his Goodness, and gratefully acknowledge his kindness towards them, he will think his Blessings well bestowed upon them, and be willing to continue them. But if he finds Men insensible of his Mercy, and unthankful for his Benefits, it is very probable that he will withdraw *the light of his countenance* from them, and take no farther care of them. For he abhorreth Ingratitude, and delights in the humble thankful Soul. If therefore thou desirest to obtain what thou askest for, be thankful for what thou hast received, that so
when

when God shall see that his Mercies are not lost and thrown away upon thee, he may be still encouraged to increase the number of them.

Thirdly, A constant performance of this Duty of Thanksgiving, will very much serve to confirm and enlarge our Love of God. When we shall frequently, twice a Day at least, call to mind the numerous instances of Gods mercy and loving kindness towards us, we shall soon find what *St. John* saith to be true, that *God is love*, and the more firmly we are perswaded of Gods Love to us, the more strong and vigorous will our Love be to him. For we cannot help loving him who, we stedfastly believe has always loved us with Love unspeakable, and always studied our true Good and Interest. Nature it self teaches us this Lesson, that we should love those who love us, and therefore if we act agreeably to our Natures, our Love to God will most certainly flow from a true sense of his Love to us. And this, a constant recollection of Gods Favours and Benefits, and a hearty Thanksgiving for them, will very strongly imprint upon our Minds.

Fourthly and Lastly, A frequent and regular performance of this Duty, will be an excellent preparative for Heaven. There many

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many of our other Duties will cease; Reading will be there at an end, for we shall have no need of Instruction, but shall be perfect in Knowledge like God himself: There will be no need of Self-Examination, because when we once come thither, we shall always keep in one right and constant Way; nor will Confession of Sins be needful there, where there is no such thing as Sin; but Praise and Thanksgiving will be the work of Eternity. Our Tongues shall never cease to tell of Gods Praise, and to shew forth all his Loving-kindnesses with gladness. There shall be no end of his Praise and our Thanks, but they shall be our happy and delightful Employment for ever and ever. So that, if we would train up our selves for Heaven, we cannot take a better course, than frequently to accustom our selves to Praise, and thank God here on Earth, and so to begin that noble Work here, which will be carried on by us hereafter, though in a much more perfect manner, to all Eternity. *Praise the Lord therefore, O my Soul,* and offer up continual Sacrifices of Thanksgiving to him here on Earth, that thou mayst be well tuned and fitted for that blest Employment of the Saints in Heaven.

I have

I have nothing more to add on this Subject, but only to inform the Pious Reader, that he will meet with excellent Forms of Thanksgiving, in that most admirable Book which I have directed him to for his Prayers, *The Whole Duty of Man.*

C H A P. VII.

Of M E D I T A T I O N.

WHAT spare Time you have left, after the performance of the foregoing Duties, I would advise you to employ in Religious Meditation, that is, in thinking seriously upon something which may tend to your spiritual good and edification.

Thus, for instance, I would have you every Morning consider with your self, how you are like to spend the following Day, what company you shall be engaged in, what business employed about, what temptations to Sin you shall most probably meet with, and what opportunities of doing good may be in all likelihood offered to you; and in a word, what evil you are most in danger of, and what good you are most likely to be capable of doing. And
according-

accordingly frame your designs for the regulation of your Life for that Day ; study with your self how you may best avoid those evils which are most likely to beset you, and embrace those opportunities of doing good, which in all probability will be offered to you. Fore-arm your Mind against the assaults of the approaching evil, and prepare it with greediness to lay hold on the good.

After this, if your Time will give you leave, it will be useful for you to reflect upon the portion of Scripture that you have read that Morning, to consider seriously with your self, whether you rightly understood what you read ; and if you did, what you found in it that might serve either for Instruction or Reproof to you, what encouragements to Vertue and dissuasives from Vice ; and in short, what that may be any way of advantage to you in relation to your Spiritual Concerns. Consider also, how you have performed your other Duties that Morning, and wherein soever you find your self to have been wanting, be sure to remember your failing, that so you may correct it the next time.

At Night thou may'st call to mind the particular Mercies of the Day past, and
make

make these the Subject of thy Meditation: Or else thou may'st reflect upon the Night it self, which coming now upon thee as the shadow of Death, will suggest to thee many useful Thoughts. Now likewise I would advise thee, as in the Morning, to reflect upon what thou hast read, and the Duties thou hast been just performing.

At any other time of the Day also, when thou art at leisure, I would advise thee to enter into thy Closet, and imploy thy self in this Holy Exercise. Fix thy Thoughts stedfastly, at such a time, on some Religious Subject, especially upon such as will most immediately influence thy Practice; such are *Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell*, which if Men seriously thought on oftner than they do, they would lead much better Lives than they now do. And that no Man may be to seek for Matter on any of these useful Subjects, I have taken care at the end of this Chapter, to subjoyn some short Meditations on each of them, which I am sure thou may'st use without any trouble; but I hope not without great advantage.

There are likewise many other Subjects proper for thy Meditation, such as the Birth, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of our Saviour. When therefore any of
those

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those Days approach, which are purposely set apart by the Church to keep up in our Minds a constant sense and remembrance of these great Mercies of God towards us, I would advise thee to reflect seriously every Day for a whole Week before, upon that Mercy which thou art suddenly to bless and praise God for in Publick. And so likewise on any other Holy-day or Saints-day, I would have thee imploy thy thoughts in Meditations suitable to the Design of the Day, that so thou may'st be fitted for the Duties of the Day, and be well prepared for that Holy Exercise of Prayer and Praise which thou art then to perform in the *great Congregation*. And that you may not excuse your self by saying that you are unable to gather your Thoughts together and fix them on any of these Subjects, I will save you this trouble, by telling you that you may find Meditations ready fram'd for these purposes, in a Book called *Reformed Devotions*.

In a Word, any Religious Subject is proper for thy Meditation, but those most of all which will with greatest strength and vehemency stir thee up, and provoke thee to Piety and Vertue. If Men imploy their Thoughts in Holy Meditations, only to entertain their Minds with fine speculative
No-

Notions of God and Religion, they will be but little the better for them; but if they think in order to Practice, and therefore chuse Practical Subjects to think upon, they will most certainly reap very great Benefits from their constant Meditations. For,

First, This will mightily tend to settle a firm sense of Religion in our Minds. When we shall every Day spend some of our Thoughts upon Religious Subjects, we may with Reason hope that Religion will never be quite out of our Minds. Such an habitual Entertainment of Her in our Thoughts, will make us familiarly acquainted with Her, and tye us fast to Her. It will make so deep an Impression upon our Minds, as will not with ease be rased out. Nay, farther,

Secondly, This will most certainly make us deeply in love with Religion. The only Reason why Men do not admire Her, and value Her as they ought, is, because they never sufficiently contemplate Her Beauties. Would we but often view Her in a true Light, we should find Her Charms irresistible, and be proud of being admitted into Her Service.

Thirdly, An habitual Practice of this Duty will teach us to delight in our own Company, and make us love to be alone.

Men

Men are very often forced to go into Company purely for this Reason, because they know not how to Employ their Time, when they are alone. But if they would set themselves constantly to serious Thinking, and accustom themselves at least to daily Meditation, they would soon learn how to spend their Time alone, and be so far from being uneasie in their own Company, that they would delight in it more than in any other. And how much this would retrench the Wickedness of the Age, I dare leave to any Impartial Judge to determine.

Fourthly, and Lastly, A constant performance of this Duty would work in us a mean and poor Opinion of the things of this World. While Men Employ all their Thoughts upon this lower World, it is no wonder if they love nothing else; for while they know nothing better, they can love nothing more. But alas! if they would suffer themselves to leave this World a little, and by the help of their Thoughts to look forward to the other, they would soon see the difference between them, and blame themselves for not thinking sooner. They would look with Scorn and Contempt upon this lower World, which has nothing in it that can satisfy a Reasonable Nature, and for the future would learn to Feast their

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Souls with more agreeable Banquets, with the delightful Pleasures of Religious Meditations, which alone carry a grateful relish with them, and truly please and satisfy a Reasonable Mind.

You therefore that have tryed the pleasures of Religious Meditations, I am sure can need no Incouragement to be frequent in them. And as for you that have not tryed, I only beg of you to Taste, and then leave off if you can.

D E A T H.

Meditation 1.

IS it appointed for all Men once to Dye? O let me wisely Consider this, and learn how to live. Let me remember that the Night is coming, wherein no Man can Work, and therefore let me do what I have to do to Day, whilst it is called to Day. Let me consider, amidst all my Worldly Injoyments, that there will certainly come a Time when I shall be taken from them, whether I will or no; and considering this, let me not cleave so fast to them as if I was never to leave them. Let me always be mindful that I have here no abiding City, that

The DUTIES of the CLOSET. III

that I am a Stranger and a Pilgrim in this World, and that my Father's House is in another Country; and therefore let me not so firmly set my Affections upon the things of this World, as if they were to be my Lot and my Portion for Ever, but let me use them only as Conveniencies in my Journey, and be ready to part with them whenever it shall seem good to my Father to call me Home. Let me often consider, that this poor Body of mine, upon which I spend now so much Time and Care, to trim and adorn it, shall one Day become more noysome than the vilest Carrion, that it shall be laid low in the Earth, and become a Prey to the Worms; and then let me be Proud of it if I can. Then shall all my Beauty be turned into Dust, and my Bones into Rottenness. But my Soul shall still live, Death has no power over that, it shall in spite of Death survive the Body, and live to all Eternity. Blessed God! how foolish a Creature then am I, who spend all my Time in cultivating and adorning this fading and perishing Body, and can afford none to my most Precious and Immortal Soul? I am ashamed and confounded at the thoughts of this my great Folly, and I am resolved for the future what I will do. I will show how truly sensible I am of the

worth of my Soul, by my care of it, and what a mean Opinion I have of this short-liv'd Body, by regarding it no farther than the good of my Soul requires. And, if I do this, I shall not be afraid to meet Death whenever it comes. Death has no sting but what Sin gives it; if therefore I am careful to pluck out this sting, I need not be afraid of it. If I am careful in my Lifetime continually to watch my Soul, and to keep it pure and undefiled from Sin, then may I cry out with St. Paul, *O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?* Then shall I dimile, even in the Agonies of Death, and welcome the kind Messenger that comes to invite me Home. But if I disarm not Death of this Sting, I shall indeed have Reason to fear him. It will be no wonder if I tremble at the sight of Death, when it shall be to me the Gate of Hell, and an entrance out of this World into a place of endless and unspeakable Torment. Be Wise therefore O my Soul betimes; remember thy latter End and prepare for it. Remember that nothing but the thoughts of a well-spent Life can free thee from the fear, and arm thee against the assaults of Death, and resolve so to live that thou may'st not be afraid to dye. Resolve to be Righteous, and then thou shalt be

be so far from fearing Death, that thou shalt have Joy and Hope in it.

Meditation 2.

Is it most certain that I shall Dye, but uncertain when? I may be called hence, for any thing I know to the contrary the next Week, or the next Day, nay, this very Day, or this very Moment, Why then do I not live in constant expectation of Death? Why do I flatter my self with the hopes of long Life, because I am young, healthful, lusty and strong? Alas! Vain Man, does not every Day's experience teach thee, that the young Dye as well as the old, the healthful as well as the sickly, the lusty and strong as well as the weak and decrepit? Why then dost thou deceive thy self by Building upon a sandy Foundation. Art thou able to say thou wilt be alive to morrow? Alas! poor Soul, to morrow is out of thy power, and perhaps thou may'st ~~never live to see it~~ ^{Thou may} it in thy fancy extend thy Life as far as thou pleasest, thou may'st lay Projects and Designs for many Weeks and Months, nay, for many Years to come; but notwithstanding this, thy Soul may be this Night required of thee. Thou art every Moment of thy Life in dan-

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ger of Death, and canst not tell but that every gasp of Breath thou fetchest may be thy last. When to thy self and thy Friends thou seemest to be farthest from it, then perhaps art thou indeed nearest to it. What a Madness then is it not to be always prepared for it? Were we sure of living any certain time, we might then with some colour of Reason, defer our Preparation for Death, till we saw it draw near us. But it is downright Madness, for a Man to say, he will prepare for Death to morrow, when he knows not but it may come to Day. Thou art afraid of missing any opportunity of improving thy Worldly Affairs, because thou art not sure that thou shalt ever meet with such another. Oh, why art thou not much more afraid of letting thy present opportunities of Repentance and Preparation for Death slip by thee, when thou thy self confessest that it is very hazardous and uncertain, whether thou shalt live to enjoy the like again. How canst thou be so wise in the trifling Concerns of this Life, and so very foolish in the much more important Concerns of another? Happy is that Man, who because he knows not when his fatal Hour shall come, whether at Even, or at Midnight, or at the Cock-crowing, or in the Morning, is continually Watching and

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Preparing for it. Yea, blessed I say is he who is thus constantly upon his Guard, and is not afraid of a Surprize. O let me Live every Moment as if I was sure to Dye the next, and then I shall not fail both of Living and Dying in Peace.

Meditation 3.

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'Tis true the Time of my Death is very uncertain, but yet I know it cannot be far from me. Threescore and Ten Years is the longest Period of Man's Life. One in a Thousand perhaps reacheth this, and One in Ten Thousand lives a little beyond it. Let this then comfort thee, O my Soul, under all the Troubles and Afflictions of this Life. They are but for a Moment, and though they lye hard upon us to Day, to Morrow we shall be free from them. Let not thy Courage therefore be cast down, neither be afraid, for thou may'st easily look to the End of thy Troubles. Let thy Patience hold out but a little longer, and thou shalt be sure in a little while to rest from thy Labours. This Consideration may make even the most uneasie State of Life supportable, since we know that it will not be long before our Condition will be changed, and we shall be set at liberty from all those Afflictions.

fictions which now surround us. The
 Thoughts of this also should quicken my
 Diligence and Industry. For I know that
 I have a great deal of Work to do, and I
 know also that all the Time I have allotted
 me, will be little enough to do it in. O
 let me not then lose one Moment of this pre-
 cious Time. Let me not waste it in idle
 Trifles and Impertinencies, but let me im-
 ploy every Moment of it in doing that
 Work which my Father sent me to do. If
 I do thus, my Time, how short soever,
 will be long enough; but if I squander it
 away in doing nothing, or nothing to the
 purpose, I shall find the want of it when
 it is too late.

J. U D G M E N T.

Meditation I.

THough Death separates our Souls from
 our Bodies for a while, yet they
 shall one Day meet again. An Angel shall
 sound a Trumpet, and command the Graves
 to give up their Dead; and then shall the
 Bodies of all that Slept arise, and be again
 united to their proper Souls. Then shall
 the Son of Man come in the Clouds of Hea-
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SET.
The DUTIES of the CLOSET. 117

ven with Power and Great Glory, and all the Nations of the Earth shall be brought before Him. Then will He require of every one of us an Account of whatever we have Thought, Said, or Done in the Body, and give to every Man according to his Works; to them who have Patiently continued in well-doing, Glory and Honour, and Immortality, and Eternal Life; but to them who have not Obeyed the Truth, but have Obeyed Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath; Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of them. Nothing will then escape the Eyes of our All-seeing Judge, but our most secret Thoughts, Words and Actions, shall be laid open before that great Assembly of Men and Angels, and weighed in the Ballance of Impartial Justice. But, O my Soul, if our most Just Judge shall be exact to mark what we have done amiss, who will be able to stand before Him? If with Rigour and Severity He shall Try and Examine us, who is there among us that will be found not Guilty? But, O Blessed Jesus, we know that thou art Merciful and willing to Save to the uttermost. We rejoyce that thou, who wast our Saviour, wilt also be our Judge. We have long experienced thy Loving-kindness towards us, and are sure that we shall find Mercy in

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thy Judgment. Thou well knowest the Infirmities of Humane Nature, and therefore we need not fear but thou wilt make gracious allowances for them. If through the whole Course of our Lives we have sincerely endeavoured to Obey all thy Commandments, if we have heartily bewailed our many Failings and Neglects, and have seriously and truly Repented of them, we doubt not but that thou, our most Kind and Merciful Redeemer, wilt accept of this our sincere, though imperfect Obedience. Let it then, O my Soul, be thy constant care to endeavour in all things to approve thy self a Faithful Servant of thy Blessed Master, and thou wilt have no Reason to be afraid of Him when He comes to be thy Judge; for in the midst of Judgment He will remember Mercy, and even in that dreadful and terrible Day, will look with a chearful Countenance upon those who in all Godly Sincerity have had their Conversation in this World, and Reward their Obedience with an Eternal Weight of Glory.

Meditation 2.

O! what a Blessed and Joyful Day will this prove to those Happy Souls, who shall then hear those comfortable Words of our Saviour

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Saviour pronounced to them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World?* O! how will those Happy Saints rejoyce, who having, like their Dear Lord, been despised and rejected of Men, shall at this great Day receive Honour and Glory from God himself, and be made to shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for Ever and Ever. Then shall God, before the Solemn Assembly of that Day, Vindicate the Dispensations of His Providence, towards his Righteous Servants in this lower World, from the Imputations of Severity and Injustice; by making it Publickly and plainly appear, that although He suffered them to be evil intreated there for a while, and made no distinction there between them and the Wicked, yet He always had them in remembrance, and only defer'd the manifestation of his special Love and Kindness for them, till this great and general Day of Retribution. Why then, O my Soul, dost thou suffer thy self to be discouraged, because thy Piety and Vertue are not immediately Rewarded in this World? Why art thou ready to be weary of well-doing, because thou dost not see that God makes any certain distinction here, in the Administration of his Temporal

ral Blessings, between thee and the most Profligate Wretch? Alas! my Soul, this World is not a proper Place for distinction; but there is a time a coming, O may it not come before thou art prepared for it, when there shall be a very visible Distinction made between the Just and the Unjust, when those steady Christians who have not fainted, shall most certainly reap, and, being separated from their false Brethren, shall be received up into Eternal Mansions of Glory.

Meditation 3.

Go on, my Soul, and if thou canst bear the dreadful Sight, now take a View of those poor trembling Wretches, who having refused to own our Saviour for their Lord and Master, are sorry to find that, whether they will or no, He must be their Judge. O! what would they now give to be hid from His sight? What would they now give to have another Life, another Opportunity of preparing for Judgment? But alas! it is too late, their time of trial is past and gone, and there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of Fiery Indignation. Alas! Unhappy Wretches! How do thy start and look pale at the sight of their

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their Judge? They need no Tryal; for their Countenances condemn them. They too well know that Blessed Jesus, whom they have so often scorned and trampled under foot, and now too late they find that he is come, according to his Word, to execute Judgment upon his Enemies. Behold! they fall down trembling at his Feet, and importunately beg forgiveness. But O unhappy Negligence! O ill-tim'd Repentance! 'Tis now in vain to sue for Pardon, when they themselves cannot but own the Justice of that dreadful Sentence, which their Judge must now pronounce upon them, *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Alas! poor Souls, how are they able to bear this deadly Sentence? Gladly would they dye under it, but that they cannot, they are now banished for ever from the Injoyment of God and Happiness, and chained down to Eternal Misery. O that Men would often entertain themselves with this sad but useful Thought, that they would often draw this Melancholy Scene in their Minds, and try whether it would not effectually damp all their Irreligious Mirth and Jollity. Let them seriously ask themselves how they will be able to bear the sight of an abused and angry Redeemer, and

and then let them abuse and provoke him if they dare. But whatever other Men may do, do not thou fail my Soul, frequently to reflect upon this Great and Terrible Day of the Lord, Terrible indeed to those, who by adding iniquity to iniquity, heap up Wrath against the Day of Wrath. Always remember that all thy Thoughts, Words and Actions, must be proved and examined at this great Day, and therefore take care that they be such as will bear this severe Tryal. Never dare to be merry or cheerful, till thou hast settled the accounts of thy Soul, lest Eternal Sorrow overtake thee unawares, and shut out every glimpse of Joy or Comfort from approaching to thee.

H E A V E N.

Meditation 1.

Could we ascend up into the Third Heaven, and view there those Glorious Mansions which our Gracious God hath prepared for all such as continue his Faithful Servants unto the end; how should we be transported with that ravishing and blissful sight? How earnestly and impatiently should

should we desire to be dissolved and to be received up into that New *Jerusalem*? How eagerly and courageously should we contend for this great and noble Prize? O let our Faith supply our want of sight? let us firmly believe what God hath told us concerning his Kingdom, and then the Joys of Heaven will be as present to our Minds, as if we really saw them. Let us believe him (and surely it is no unreasonable thing stedfastly to believe him, who cannot possibly deceive us) and we shall soon be possessed with a true Sense of the greatness of that Happiness, which is laid up for the Saints in Heaven. The very lowest and meanest thing that the Scriptures say of it, is, that it is incomparably beyond all the Happiness of this Life. The Pleasures of this World are oftentimes great in expectation, but always very poor in the enjoyment; but those of the other World are infinitely greater in the enjoyment, than they were in the expectation. Here our Pleasures are all imbittered with an ungrateful mixture of Pain and Trouble; there they shall be pure and unmixt, free from any base Alloy, or bitter Ingredients. Here a frequent repetition of our Pleasures makes them dull and nauseous to us; but there we shall continually repeat them with
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the same vigorous delight, with which we first enjoyed them, and they shall always be fresh and new to us. Here our Pleasures are unconstant and uncertain, always upon the wing and ready to leave us; there they shall be fixed and unchangeable, and we shall have a secure possession of them. So vastly will the Pleasures of Heaven surpass, in all respects, these our Earthly ones, that when we come to taste the one, we shall grudge even the very name of Pleasure to the other. Oh Blessed God! What egregious folly then are those Men guilty of, who for the deceitful Pleasures of Sin part with their Title to those substantial Joys, which will be the certain reward of Vertue and Obedience. Cheat not thou thy self thus, O my Soul, but with an Eye of Faith look forward into the Heavenly Paradise, and from the Contemplations of the solid Happiness of that glorious Place, learn to despise this poor counterfeit Happiness, which the vain World makes her boasts of.

Meditation 2.

Great and Glorious are the things which are spoken of thee, thou City of God. Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive

Perceive how richly thou art furnished with all things necessary to make the Happiness of thine Inhabitants compleat and perfect. But this in general we know, that as the Happiness which thy blessed Inhabitants enjoy is vastly beyond that which we call Happiness in this World, so is it likewise in it self exceeding great; great indeed, since it is too big for us to frame any notion or conception of; infinitely great, because it shall be like the Happiness of him, who is indeed Happiness it self. For we know and are assured, that when we shall ascend up into Heaven, we shall become like God himself, like him, as in other things, so in his Happiness and Glory. Did we therefore know no more of our future Happiness than this, it were enough to satisfy us in our inquiries concerning it, for what can we desire more than to be like God, the most perfectly happy being, in Happiness? But if we still desire to be more particularly informed concerning the ingredients that help to make up the mighty Happiness, the Scriptures will discover some of them to us. They promise us an infinite enlargement of our Knowledge, and that our Wills shall be unchangeably bent towards good, and our Affections chained to the most amiable objects; that we shall know God, even as he knows.

knows us, chearfully and readily perform his Will, and love him, and be beloved by him, with the most intense and ardent Affection; that we shall be admitted into the Society of Angels and Just Men made perfect, and enjoy their endearing Conversation and Friendship, and partake with them in their blessed Employments and in that fulness of Joy, which is continually in Gods Presence. O Glorious State, how wilt thou feast our Understandings, Wills and Affections, by setting before them constantly such objects, as they shall contemplate, love and admire with inexpressible pleasure. Were this the only Happiness of Heaven, it would be an abundant recompence for all that we can do or suffer in this World. But alas! we know not yet what our Happiness will be, and even this which we pretend to know, we know but in part, very darkly and obscurely. This I know, O may I often think on it, that the Rewards of Heaven are infinitely beyond every thing which I can now conceive or imagine, and that the Happiness which the Blessed Souls there enjoy, being like the Happiness which God himself enjoys, must be infinitely great and infinitely perfect.

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Meditation 3.

As the Happiness of Heaven shall be infinitely great, so shall it be eternally durable; it will not only be an exceeding but an eternal Weight of Glory. It would mightily pall and damp the Happiness of the Saints, as great as it is, to see to an end of it; to see, though at never so great a distance, a time coming, when they should be divested of all their Glory, and reduced to their Primitive Poverty. But the Inhabitants of Heaven have no fear of this, their Pleasures, as they are without measure, so are they without end; they are possessed of Everlasting Life and Glory, and their Happiness can no more cease, than God can cease to be, for he hath promised that it shall be eternal, and therefore it must last as long as God is true, which will be for ever and ever. Look up then, O my Soul, and survey the Promised Land, steadfastly behold its Beauty, and consider its duration, and then tell me what thou would'st give to be possessed of it: Alas! my Soul, all that thou canst give will not purchase it, but thy Blessed Saviour and Redeemer hath already purchased it for thee, and given thee a just claim and title to

to it. He has only required a sincere Obedience to all his Commands, as a condition of Everlasting Life; perform this, and Heaven is thine own. Be sure but to follow thy Blessed Master, and he will lead thee into Heaven. This, this is the only way to get thither; we must be holy before we can be happy, and perform our Lord's Will, before we can be received up into his Joy. And oh! what is there that I would not do or suffer, to obtain Heaven? How many difficulties do I constantly encounter and surmount, purely for the sake of the paltry Pleasures of this Life? and can I then think any thing difficult, when Heaven is to be my Reward, if I fight a good fight, and obtain the Victory. Oh no! were I to run through flame to Heaven it would be an easie passage; I should never faint under the fiery Tryal, while I kept my Eyes constantly fixed on that Joy which my Gracious God hath set before me. But thanks be to God, this is seldom made the way to Heaven; the way thither is generally smooth and pleasant enough, and though sometimes we meet with Thorns and Brambles in it, yet great part of it is as pleasant as we can wish it. But, be it as it will, if thou would'st obtain the end, it is absolutely necessary thou should'st

ould'st use the means. If thou desirest to be like God in his Happiness, it is requisite thou should'st first endeavour to be like him in his Holiness; be Pure as he is Pure, and he has promised thou shalt be happy as he is happy. Now then may'st thou make sure of Heaven, if thou thinkest it worth obtaining, now may'st thou obtain the Crown, if thou thinkest it worth thy while to strive for it. Rouze, rouze my Soul, and instantly set about thy Work, I am so transported with the prospect of the Heavenly Canaan, and ravished with the hopes of possessing it that I resolve to fight my way to it through every thing that opposeth my Religious Progress, and to press forward, even through the most rigid and severe Afflictions, to those Glorious Mansions of Eternal Happiness and Pleasure.

H. E. L. L.

Meditation I.

HOW admirably, O Blessed Jesu, is thy Religion fitted to work both on our Hopes and Fears. Great are its Promises, and great its Threatnings, on the one side a Heaven to invite us, on the other

a Hell to fright us into Obedience. O! let us fear here, that we may not for ever smart hereafter. Consider, O my Soul, before it is too late, what Torments are prepared for the Disobedient in the next World, and knowing the Terrors of the Lord do not dare to Disobey. Think often on that dreadful Sentence, *Depart from me ye cursed into Everlasting Fire*; think duely on it, and then provoke God if thou dar'st. Dost thou know what it is to depart from God? It is nothing less than to depart from all that's Good, and all that's Happy, to be thrust away from the Blessed Regions of Everlasting Life and Glory, and to be banished from all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Paradise, alas! my Soul, how canst thou bear the thoughts of this? Yet this will certainly be thy Lot, if thou art not careful by a timely Repentance to prevent it. Too sadly alas! do the Damned Spirits know the meaning of this mournful Word, *Depart*: O! how do those wretched Souls fret and vex, and grieve and rage at the Thoughts of this dreadful Word. When they look up to Heaven and consider what they might have been, O! how does it Torment them to think what they now are? Unhappy Souls! they feel by woful Experience, what the loss of Heaven is;

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they see Heaven indeed, but the sight of it serves only to increase their Pain, and continually to reproach their Folly. Oh! how do they lash themselves for this their Folly, and curse those gay delusions which cheated them of their Eternal Happiness? Envy, Despair, and Madness rack their Souls, they thirst for that which they must never enjoy, and pierce and wound themselves with raging Grief. Reason it self, which gives us here relief, serves only to increase and raise their Torments. Be wise then, O my Soul, in time, and take care not to lose that Happiness, the loss of which will make a Hell for thee in the other World. Weigh well the Joys of Earth and Heaven in the just Ballance of Reason, and so chuse now, that thou may'st not for ever lament and curse thy choice hereafter. Harken to thy Conscience in this World, whilst it gives thee friendly Advice, that so it may not be thy Tormentor in the next. For this is that ever gnawing Worm which continually preys upon the Damned Souls, and chaseth away all Rest and Quiet from them.

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Meditation 2.

Sure it is Hell enough to be doomed continually to lament the loss of Heaven; we shall need no other Punishment to make us miserable. And yet alas! this is not half of Hell. Were this all, the Damned Spirits would think their Punishments light, when compared with that which they are now Chained to. *Depart from me*, is but one Branch of their Sentence; that which follows is, if possible, still more Dismal, *into Everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*. O dreadful and intolerable Sentence! Who can dwell with Everlasting Burnings? We are not able to endure here the scorching of the Fire for a Moment, and how then shall we be able to endure the more exquisite and piercing Fire of Hell, for ever and ever? But yet this will be the Portion of every Wicked and Ungodly Wretch in the next World. And to add to their misery, (though indeed it is already large enough, and needs no addition) they shall be forced continually to hear the Groans and Cryes, and to see the sad and miserable Condition of their Fellow-sufferers. O sad and mournful Scene! a Place full of Darkness and melancholy Horrour,
full

full of Howling and Weeping and gnashing
 of Teeth. O unspeakable Torments! In-
 finite in your Extent, and Eternal in your
 Duration, too great to be born, and yet
 not to be fled from. Were there ever to
 be an end put to the Sufferings of the Dam-
 ned, the prospect of this, though at never
 so great a distance, would help to alleviate
 their Misery; but alas! their Pains will
 never wear away, but will be alike sharp
 and quick to all Eternity. They shall feel
 more in one Moment, than they endured
 on Earth all the time of their Lives, and
 this infinitely great Pain and Torture shall
 last for ever and ever. Their Fire shall be
 so far from being ever quenched, that it
 shall never abate, and their Bodies shall
 be always prey'd upon by the Flames, and
 yet shall never be consumed. In vain shall
 they Sigh and Groan, and Weep and Wail,
 they are miserable beyond all relief, and
 beyond all expression. They shall seek
 Death, but shall not find it; they shall de-
 sire to Dye, but Death shall fly from them.
 Eternal Life shall be a Curse to them,
 since they shall only live in unspeakable
 Misery, only live to wish in vain for Death.
 God's Wrath is upon them, his Vengeance
 has overtaken them, and will continue
 heavy upon them, to all Eternity.

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Meditation 3.

Wouldst thou know, my Soul, how to avoid this Place of Torment? There is but one Way. Learn truly to Fear Him who can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him, and then thou needest not fear Hell it self. 'Tis true indeed the Way which leads to Hell is broad and spacious, and at first sight seems to be a pleasant Road, and therefore it is necessary that thou shouldst always remember that the end thereof is bitterness. Many there are, alas! too many, that walk in it, and will perswade thee to bear them Company; they will use enticing Words, and flatter thee with their double Tongues; but believe them not, for Destruction is in their Paths, and the way of Peace have they not known. The only certain way to escape God's Wrath, is to avoid those Sins for which it comes upon the Children of Disobedience. When ever therefore thou art Tempted to any thing that is sinful, be sure to avoid it, for it will lead thee down directly to Hell. Only be careful to keep thy Innocency, and then thou mayst safely Triumph over Hell it self. But if thou commitest Sin, and obeyst the

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the Devil, then art thou the Servant of the Devil, and shalt be partner with him in his Misery. Every particular breach of our Duty carrieth us nearer and nearer to this Dreadful Place of Torment, and every Sin unrepented of casts us down towards it. Consider this all ye that forget God, least He snatch ye away, and there be none to deliver ye. Consider this, I say, and show your selves Men; Men whose Reason teaches them to fly from Danger, and to seek for Peace. Remember that the pleasures of Sin are not to be purchased, without the loss of thy Heavenly Happiness; nay more, that those short and fading pleasures will end in an Eternity of Misery; think seriously and frequently of Hell, of the greatness of its Torments, and the perpetuity of them; think as often on the pleasures of Sin, their emptiness and vanity, and the shortness of their continuance; and then I can safely leave thee to choose for thy self, either Obedience and Heaven, or Sin and Hell.

C H A P. V I I I.

Of Private Humiliation.

T Here is one Duty still behind, which I have too much reason to fear is but little thought of, even among the better sort of Christians; and this is *Private Humiliation*, or the setting apart some time to bewail in secret both our own particular Sins, and the general sinfulness of the whole World. This, I confess, is but a melancholly Employment, but yet so necessary an one, that without it we can never hope to enjoy any true Peace or Cheerfulness. For this is that *Godly sorrow which bringeth forth Joy*, and unless we can thus Mourn, we shall never possess any solid or lasting Comfort.

Our Holy Mother the Church has taken peculiar Care to provide for the Performance of this Duty in Publick, having Ordered several Days in the Year to be set apart for this purpose. Such are all Her Days of Fasting and Abstinence, both ordinary and extraordinary, which were all designed by Her to be so many Days of
Mourn-

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Mourning and Humiliation, Mortification and Repentance.

And certainly it will well become us her Children, in Imitation of her holy Example, to set apart some time for the discharge of this Duty in private; that so there may be an uniformity and agreement in our publick and private Behaviour, and we may Act like Christians, not only when we appear in the *great Congregation*, but also when we withdraw into our closet and severest Retirements. We must not think it enough to comply with the Commands of the Church, in observing Her Publick Days of Humiliation, but we must be the same in our Closets that we are in our Churches, possessed with the same sense of our own and other Mens Sins, and humbled under the same weighty load of Sorrow, or else it is very much to be feared our Religion is all dissembled. Nay, indeed the Closet seems to be the most proper Place for the performance of this Duty, because we have not those Restraints upon us there, which we have in Publick. There our Minds will be at perfect liberty to reflect seriously on those grievous Sins, for which we humble our selves, and we may freely disburthen our selves of all our Sorrows, and give our Tears their full vent. Do

not therefore content thy self with a discharge of this Duty in Publick only, but let the Closet have some of thy pious sighs and groans, which seems to be a place peculiarly fitted for this melancholy and solitary Employment.

Thus did the Holy Men of Old. *David* did not think it enough to lament his own and other Mens Sins, in the Publick Place of God's Worship, but he retired into his inmost Chamber, and there *watered his couch with his tears*, and truly mourned and grieved for those *who kept not Gods Law.* *Jeremiah* sought for the most secret and retired places, and there poured forth his Soul in Tears and Lamentations, and mourned before his God, for the crying Sins of his Nation. And Holy *Daniel* thought it not too much to spend *three whole Weeks* in Private Mourning and Humiliation for his own and the Peoples Sins.

Do not thou therefore, Dear Christian, think it too much to spend a part of one Day in every Week in this Holy Employment; but constantly on every *Fryday*, the Day on which thy Blessed Saviour suffered for thy Sins, make it thy business to humble thy self before thy God in Private, and heartily and sincerely to bewail thy own Sins, and the Sins of all Mankind, and earnestly

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neſſly beg Pardon for them. If thou doſt thus, thou wilt obſerve the Day, as the Church deſigned it ſhould be obſerved; for certainly no Imployment can be ſo proper on that Day, on which *the Lord of Life and Glory was made a Sacrifice for Sin*, as this of Mourning and Humiliation, of deſtroying and abjuring Sin, and of ſhewing our hatred of it. And that thou mayſt not be at a loſs, for want of a Form of Devotion, which thou mayſt conſtantly uſe upon this Occaſion, I will take care to furniſh thee with one at the end of this Chapter. In the mean while I ſhall endeavour to ſtir you up to this Holy Practice, by repreſenting to you two very great Advantages that you will obtain by it.

First, By humbling your ſelf before God, and bewailing your own and other Mens Sins, you may probably prevent ſome of thoſe terrible Judgments, which God ſeems to have Decreed againſt your ſelf and others. If any thing can ſtop the Arm of Divine Juſtice, it muſt be the powerful Humiliation and Sorrow of them who truly Mourn for Sin. Towards ſuch as theſe, God has always ſhewed himſelf very Compaſſionate; and has not only ſpared them themſelves, but very often others alſo for their ſakes. Their Cryes and Interceſſions pierce

the Heavens, and have an easie access to His Presence, and their Sighs and Tears melt Him down into Pity and Compassion. He cannot strike, while there are *Ten* such Persons in a City, but for the sake of those *Ten*, all the rest shall escape. This has been the ordinary, I will not say the constant, Way of His proceeding, and therefore we may have great hopes, if we sincerely and passionately mourn for Sin, that for our sakes God will be Merciful to our whole Nation; or at least, that if His Wrath doth descend upon the Children of Disobedience, that he *will hear our sorrowful cry and will help us.*

Secondly. They that mourn thus Religiously, shall most certainly be comforted. They that thus sow in tears shall undoubtedly reap in joy. Though they do not immediately feel the happy Effects of this their Pious Humiliation, yet at the last they shall most surely find our Lord's Words true, *They shall be comforted.* They shall then indeed be Comforted, when our Blessed and most Just Judge, who keeps all their *Tears* in his *Bottle*, shall Command them to enter into the *joy of their Lord*, Then shall *their sorrow be turned into Joy*, and because they once Wept, when Tears were necessary, they shall now ne-

ver

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never Weep more, *but all tears shall be wiped from their eyes.* And who then would not be contented to mourn here, that he may be sure never to mourn hereafter? Who would not willingly imploy every Moment of his Life in such a Holy and Religious Mourning, as will purchase for him an Eternity of Joy? Grant, O Merciful God, I beseech thee, that I may be such a true Mourner in this *vale of tears* and Misery, that I may have a Title to thy Promise of Everlasting Comfort, and that when I shall be taken off of the Melancholly Stage of this World, I may be received into those Mansions of Joy and Pleasure, where Grief and Sorrow never enter.

An Office of Humiliation, to be used by private Christians in their Closets, every Fryday in the Year.

AS soon as you rise in the Morning, apply your self to your ordinary course of Devotions; only instead of the Heads of Self-Examination set down in this Book for your Daily use, make use of those in The Whole Duty of Man, which I have before advised, upon extraordinary occasions. And

be sure to do this with great care and thoughtfulness, that so thou mayst bring thy self to a right sense of the greatness and multitude of those thy Sins, which thou intendest to Mourn for. After you have regularly and decently performed your ordinary Devotions, you may give over and refresh your self for a while, and then return to your Closet again. Where, when you have composed your self, I would have you begin these your Solemn Devotions, with this useful Reflection upon your own State and Condition.

A Soliloquy.

O My Soul, thou hast weighed thy self in the Balance of the Sanctuary, and thou art found very light. Light indeed are all thy good Works, but thy Sins are very heavy; like a weighty Burthen they are to heavy for thee to bear. Oh! whether will such a dreadful Weight sink thee? It will pull thee down into the lowermost Hell, if thou dost not take care to free thy self from it, if thou art not truly sorrowful for it, and firmly resolved to shake it off. There is scarce any one Commandment of thy God, which thou hast not broken, which thou hast not transgressed time after

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after time, notwithstanding all the kind Motions of the Blessed Spirit, and the checks of thy own faithful Conscience to the contrary. Thou hast run with delight into Sin, and foolishly and impudently gloried in thy Disobedience. The number of thy Sins is like the number of the Sands of the Sea, and the greatness of them is beyond all Expression. Oh! let thy Tears be as hard to be numbered as thy Sins, and let thy sorrow for them infinitely transcend the delight that thou tookest in committing them. Let thine Eye become a Fountain of true Penitent Tears, that so being first washed in thy own Tears, thou mayst be fit to be washed from thy Sins in the Blood of thy Dear Saviour. *Let thine Eyes trickle down, and cease not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down and behold from Heaven.* And let thy Heart be filled with such a sorrowful and pious Contrition, as thou knowest thy God will not despise. This, O my Soul, is the sure way to obtain true Peace and Comfort, this is that Repentance which thou shalt never Repent of.

Immediately after this, fall down upon thy Knees, and make the following humble Confession of thy Sins to God.

A Con-

A Confession.

A Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all Men; I acknowledge and bewail my manifold Sins and Wickedness, which I from time to time most grievously have committed, by Thought, Word and Deed, against thy Divine Majesty, most justly provoking thy Wrath and Indignation against me. I do earnestly Repent, and am heartily sorry for these my misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto me, the burden of them is intolerable. Have Mercy upon me, have Mercy upon me, most Merciful Father; for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christs sake, forgive me all that is past, and grant that I may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of Life, to the Honour and Glory of thy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer

A Prayer for Forgiveness of Sins.

Look down, O Merciful Father, look down from Heaven, and behold a poor miserable Wretch, oppressed with the burthen of his Sins, and overwhelmed with Sorrow. Look upon me with an Eye of Pity and Compassion, who am heartily grieved for my Sins, and firmly resolved to forsake them. Send me Comfort, O Blessed Redeemer from thy Holy Place, and visit me with the Light of thy Countenance. Receive, O Gracious Father, receive a true and sincere Penitent, who with Sighs and Tears cries aloud for Mercy. Thy property, O Lord, is alwayes to have Mercy, and to forgive, O let thy Merciful Ears be open to my Prayers, and let them receive that Blessed Answer from thee; *Son, be of good cheer, thy Sins are forgiven thee.* Grant this, O Merciful God, for thy Son Jesus Christs sake.

A Prayer

*A Prayer for Grace to amend
our Lives.*

O Holy Lord God, who by thy Grace
 workest in us both to will and to do
 according to thy good Pleasure, give me
 such a measure of thy Grace, I most hum-
 bly beseech thee, as may enable me to
 amend my Life for the time to come, and
 to be obedient to all thy Wise and Just
 Commands. It is the earnest desire of my
 Soul to please thee, and I know that there
 is no way to please thee, but by keeping
 thy Commandments. O let me ever have
 them written in my Heart, that they may
 be always present with me, and that I
 may continually meditate upon them. Grant
 that I may from this Hour bid adieu to all
 Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and that I
 may dedicate my self entirely to thee, to
 serve thee in Righteousness and true Holi-
 ness. Thou, O Lord, out of thy infinite
 Kindness and Mercy, hast graciously been
 pleased to give me a sight and sense of my
 Sins; O let me ever hate and abhor them,
 detest and forsake them, and cleave entire-
 ly unto thee whom my Soul longeth for.
 Let me no more return with the Dog to
 his

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his vomit, but so establish me with thy Grace, that no Temptation of the World, the Devil, or my own Flesh, may be ever able to draw me to offend thee, but that being made free from Sin, and becoming thy Servant, I may have my Fruit unto Holiness, and in the end Everlasting Life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When you have fervently and affectionately put up these Prayers to God, in the next place I would advise you to read over this following portion of the Psalms, with great seriousness and attention.

1 **H**Ave mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord heal me for my bones are vexed.

2 My Soul also is sore troubled, but Lord, how long wilt thou punish me?

3 I am weary of my groaning, every night wash I my bed, and water my couch with my tears, my beauty is gone for very trouble.

4 For thine arrows stick fast in me, O Lord, and thy Hand presseth me sore.

5 There is no health in my flesh because of thy displeasure, neither is there any rest in my bones by reason of my Sin.

6. For

6 For my wickednesses are gone over my head, and are like a sore burthen too heavy for me to bear.

7 I am brought into so great trouble, that I go mourning all the Day long.

8 I am feeble and sore smitten, I have roared for the very disquietness of my heart.

9 Lord, thou knowest all my desire, and my groaning is not hid from thee.

10 For I truly am set in the plague, and my heaviness is ever in my sight.

11 But I will confess my wickedness, and by sorry for my Sin.

12 Wherefore turn thou unto me, O Lord, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and in misery.

13 The sorrows of my heart are enlarged, O bring thou me out of my troubles.

14 Look upon mine adversity and forgive me all my Sins.

15 Mine iniquities have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my Head, and my Heart hath failed me.

16 Yea even from my youth up, thy terrours have I suffered with a troubled mind.

17 For thy wrathful displeasure goeth over me, and the fear of thee hath undone me.

18 My

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18 My heart is smitten down and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.

19 For the voice of my groaning my bones will scarce cleave to my flesh.

20 Yea I have eaten ashes as it were bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.

21 And that because of thine indignation and wrath, for thou hast taken me up and cast me down.

Immediately after this Psalm, read some Portion of Scripture proper for this occasion: In the Old Testament read the Story of Ahab, who, notwithstanding his great wickedness, upon a sincere humiliation, found favour with God, 1 Kin. 22. In the New Testament, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, who, though he had lived riotously and wickedly, yet because he humbled himself for his Sin, and earnestly begg'd forgiveness of his Father, he was kindly received by him, and had all his past faults blotted out, Luke 15. These Lessons read with due attention, will administer great comfort to thee in thy sorrow, and fill thee with joyful hopes of obtaining a gracious Pardon of all thy Sins, from thy most merciful and tender Father.

After

After thou hast made an end of Reading, conclude thy Morning Devotions with the following Thanksgiving and Prayer.

A Thanksgiving.

O Blessed Lord, who, out of thy great love and kindness towards me a vile and miserable Sinner, hast been graciously pleased to bring me to a sight of my Sins, and to excite in me Holy Desires of leaving them; I desire to return thee my most humble and unfeigned Thanks for this thy unspeakable Mercy. O! how miserable should I have been, if thou hadst given me over, as justly thou mightest, to an hardness of Heart, and contempt of thy Word and Commandment. But, O Lord, thou hast not dealt thus with thy Servant, but hast opened his Eyes to see the things that belong to his Peace. Thou thoughtest it not enough to redeem me once from Death, by the Precious Blood of thy most dear Son, but thou hast many times plucked me from the Jaws of Hell, when I was flying from that Happiness which my Blessed Saviour purchased for me. O! how often have I been engaged in the Paths of Ruine and Destruction, how often has thy Holy Spirit

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Spirit led me out of them, and showed me the way to Everlasting Bliss and Glory? Even now, O Lord, thou kindly callest and invitest me to thy Kingdom, even now thou exhortest me to leave my burthen, and to enter into thy Rest. What shall I render unto thee, O Lord, for this thine inestimable benefit? For this and all other thy Mercies I will praise thy Name for ever and ever, and endeavour constantly to please thee, by a sincere and universal Obedience to all thy Commands. O Lord, enable me to make good these my Vows, for the sake of thy Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A Prayer.

O Holy Lord, who art ready to embrace all true Penitents that come unto thee, who delightest not in the Death of a Sinner, but hadst rather that he should turn from his Wickedness and live, hear me, and help me, I most earnestly beseech thee. Strengthen and confirm in me those Holy Resolutions, which thou hast put into my Heart, and grant that I may persevere in them unto my Lives end. Let not my Tears ever be wip'd from my Eyes, or my

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my Sorrow banished from my Heart, till I have made my Peace with thee, and again become one of thy true Children. Bless and prosper the good Work which thou hast begun in me, that so I may proceed from Sorrow to Repentance, and then being truly penitent I may obtain thy Pardon and Forgiveness. Wash me thoroughly from mine Iniquity, and cleanse me from my Sin, that so I may be Holy and Pure in thy Sight, and duly qualified for the participation of that Eternal Happiness, which thou hast promised to all those who truly love and serve thee. And this I ask and beg of thee, in the Name, and for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The end of the Mornings Devotions.

Devotions for the Afternoon.

AS thy Morning was spent in bewailing thy own Sins, let thy Afternoon be spent in lamenting the general sinfulness of Mankind; that so the whole World may fare the better for thy Tears and thy Prayers. When therefore thou hast settled thy self in thy Closet, begin thy Devotions with this serious Soliloquy.

A Soli-

A Soliloquy.

WHen I reflect upon the general corruption of Mankind, their averfeness from all good, and their readiness to all evil, their open and prophane contempt of God and Religion, and their impudent encouraging of all manner of Sin and Wickedness, I am astonished and confounded; astonished with wonder at the patience and long-suffering of God, which has thus long foreborne with us; and confounded with fear and horrour at the prospect of those many dreadful Judgments which seem to hang over us, and are just ready to fall upon us. For if God should deal with us after our sins, and reward us after our Iniquities, we should soon become like *Sodom and Gomorrah, a Lake of Fire and Brimstone*. Our iniquities have ascended up into Heaven, and alas! What can they bring down thence but Wrath and Destruction? They cry aloud to God for Vengeance, and almost call his Justice into question, because he is so merciful as to bear with us. But though God has thus long forbore us, we must not be so presumptuous, as to think he will still suffer us. Though he is slow to anger,
yet

yet his Wrath will most certainly descend at last upon the Children of Disobedience, and though it has been long coming, it will be very grievous and heavy when it comes. Let it be thy business then, O my Soul, to endeavour to keep off the fierce anger of the Lord, as far as thou art able; let thy Sighs and Tears continually come before him, and plead for Mercy, and let thy Prayers continually ascend up into his presence, and with importunate cries beg of him that he *would spare his People*, and not bring his *Heritage to Confusion*. It may be, that he will pitty thy Cry, and will hear thee; it may be that thy Sighs and Tears may melt him into Compassion, and that for thy sake it may go well for a time with the Evil-doers. Cry aloud then, O my Soul, and try if, by thy fervent Prayers, thou canst not prevail.

After this, read the following Psalm.

1 **I**T grieveth me when I see the transgressours, because they keep not they Law.

2 My Heart sheweth me the Wickedness of the ungodly, that there is no fear of God before his Eyes.

3. For

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3 For he flattereth himself in his own sight; until his abominable Sin be found out.

4 The Words of his Mouth are unrighteous and full of deceit; he hath left off to behave himself wisely and to do good.

5 He imagineth mischief upon his bed, and hath set himself in no good way; neither doth he abhor any thing that is evil.

6 The Lord looked down from Heaven upon the Children of Men, to see if there were any that would understand and seek after God.

7 But they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable, there is none that doth good, no not one.

8 Destruction and unhappiness is in their ways and the way of peace have they not known, there is no fear of God before their Eyes.

9 But health is far from the ungodly, because, O Lord, they regard not thy statutes.

10 Wherefore, when they were sick I put on sackcloth, and humbled my Soul with fasting, and my Prayer shall turn into mine own bosom.

11 I behaved my self as though it had been my Friend or my Brother, I went heavily as one that mourneth for his Mother.

12 For

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12 *For I am horribly afraid, O Lord God, for the ungodly that forsake thy Law.*

13 *Rivers of Water run down mine Eyes, because men keep not thy commandments.*

After this Psalm, read the Eighteenth Chapter of Genesis, where God Promiseth Abraham, that he would spare Sodom if he could find but Ten righteous Persons in it. And let a due Reflection upon this, help to enlarge thy pious Sorrow, and to encrease thy Christian Concern for the general sinfulness of the World; that so, for thy sake, and the sake of some other truly Devout Souls, God may be merciful to all Mankind. And, to make sure of his Mercy and Pity, add these following Prayers to thy Tears, and try if, by this Holy Violence, thou canst not extort Compassion from Him.

A C O N F E S S I O N .

O Most Holy Lord God, who art Terrible in thy Judgments towards the Children of Disobedience, who for the Sins of Mankind didst once drown the whole World, and didst also rain Fire and Brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, for the sinfulness of them that dwelt there-
in

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in; I acknowledge and confess, in behalf of my self and all the rest of Mankind, that we have justly deserved thy severest Judgments, for we have all gone astray and dealt wickedly, there is not one of us that doth Good, no not one. We have openly contemn'd and ridicul'd Vertue and Religion, and in their room have set up and encourag'd all manner of Vice and Wickedness, we have dishonoured thy Name, defiled thy House, prophaned thy Worship and slighted thy Commandments. Nay, O Lord, We have been so hardy, that we have been Insensible under thy Punishments, and that which thou in Mercy designed to Reform and Amend us, has served only to make us more Obstinate and Rebellious against thee. We have made our selves Slaves to the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and have Engag'd our selves in a War against Heaven, and have Fought against our own Happiness. And now, O Lord, what can we expect from Thee but Judgment and fiery Indignation, which is indeed the due Reward of our Sins? We must confess that we are ripe for Destruction, and ought every Moment to expect to have the World set on Fire about us. But, O Lord, thou art a
I Mer-

Merciful God, to thee belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against thee, and have not obeyed thy voice, by walking in those Laws which thou hast set before us. Deal not with us therefore, O Merciful Lord, after our Sins, neither reward us after our Iniquities, but let thy Anger and thy Wrath be turned away from us, and bring us not to Confusion, Let the Prayers and Tears of those few Pious Souls, who mourn in secret for the Sins of Mankind, stop thy avenging Hand, and prevail with thee to allow a sinful World a little more time for Repentance. O let not our obstinacy tire out thy patience, but do thou mollifie our stony Hearts, do thou smite these hard Rocks, that true penitent Tears may flow from them. Bring us to a sense of our Sins, and a dread of thy Judgments, that so we may not dare to provoke thee any more, but may humble our selves before thee, in a most sincere and sorrowful Contrition of Heart, that thou being pleased therewith, may'st repent thee of the Evil, which thou ha'st said thou would'st do unto us, and do it not. O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do, not according to our Merits, but thy Mercies; for the sake

of

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of him, who hath purchased and redeemed us with his own Blood, even Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Then use these Ejaculations taken out of the Whole Duty of Man.

O Lord, of whom shall we seek for succour but of thee, who for our Sins art justly displeased? Yet O Lord God most Holy, O Lord most Mighty, O Holy and most Merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter Pains of Eternal Death.

Father, we have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and are not worthy to be called thy Children; yet, O Lord do not thou cast off the bowels and compassions of a Father, but even as a Father pitieth his own Children, so be thou merciful unto us.

O God, we confess that we have defac'd that Image of thine, which thou did'st imprint upon our Souls; yet, O thou faithful Creator, have pity on thy Creatures.

O Jesu, we have by many and grievous Sins crucified thee afresh, yet thou, who prayed'st for thy Persecutors, interceed for us also, and suffer not, O Blessed Redeemer,

deemer, our Souls (which are the price of thy blood,) to perish Everlastingly.

O Spirit of Grace, we have by many Horrid Impieties done despiht to Thee; yet, O Blessed Comforter, though we have often Grieved Thee; be thou pleased to succour and relieve us, and to give us Grace to Repent of our Sins, that we may obtain the End of our Hopes, even the Salvation of our Souls.

In Thee, O Lord, is all our Hope and Trust, O cast not out our Souls, but let the Light of thy Countenance shine favourably upon us, and visit us with thy Salvation.

An INTERCESSION.

O Merciful Lord God, who didst send thy Son into the World to Redeem the World, and art not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance, and the Knowledge of the Truth, have Mercy upon all *Jews, Turks, Infidels and Hereticks*. Be favourable, O Blessed Lord, to thine ancient People the *Jews*, take from them all hardness of Heart, and open their Eyes that they may see though late, the Lord of Life and Glory, and with an unfeigned submission turn un-
to

to Him, and cheerfully obey his Commandments. Let the Light of thy Gospel shine forth, even unto the darkeſt Corners of the Earth, that ſo the whole World may come to the ſaving knowledge of thy Truth, and become one Sheep-fold under the Great Shepherd of our Souls Chriſt Jeſus. And grant, O Lord, that all thoſe, who, by thy Infinite Grace and Favour, have heard of the Name of thy Dear Son, and are admitted into the Communion of his Church, may endeavour to Adorn the Religion they Profeſs, by the Holineſs and Integrity of their Lives, by a pure, meek and humble Converſation. Bleſs all Degrees of Men in the whole World from the higheſt to the loweſt; but more eſpecially thoſe whom thou haſt Entruſted with the Sovereign Power, of Governing thy People. Grant that they may wiſely conſider, that the Sword is put into their Hands, for the maintenance of Virtue, and the diſcouragement of Wickedneſs and Vice, and may manage it accordingly; that ſo both Chriſtian and Heathen Governours may endeavour as far as lieth in them, to promote Virtue and Goodneſs, and to put down all Vice and Wickedneſs. And to all of Inferiour Ranks and Stations give thy Heavenly Grace, that they

I 3 may

may all be mindful of their several Duties, and carefully and Honestly perform them. Make us all sensible of the great danger we have brought our selves into by our Sins, and enable us, by the help of thy Holy Spirit to dis-entangle our selves from them, and to turn unto thee with a stedfast Faith and unfeigned Repentance. Avert those Judgments from us, which we have all just reason to fear, especially we who are called by the Name of thy Dear Son, because we sin against much clearer light, more powerful convictions, and are endowed with a greater strength by far to resist Temptations, than the unbelieving world. Give Light, O Lord, to all that want it, and enable all to live up to that Light which they have already, that so the Light which is in them, may not be turned into Darkness. Finally, O Lord, be Merciful to all Men, make us all such as thou would'st have us, and then we shall be such as we our selves desire to be. Turn thou us, O Good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Be favourable, O Lord, be favourable to us: For thou art a Merciful God, Long-suffering and of great Pity. Thou sparest when we deserve Punishment and in thy Wrath thinkest upon Mercy. Spare thy People,

good

good Lord spare them. O Lord, for thy Mercy is great, and after the multitude of thy Mercies look upon us; through the Merits and Mediation of thy Blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer.

O Gracious God who, upon the Intercession of thy Holy Servant *Moses*, didst turn from thy fierce Wrath, and repent of the Evil which thou thought'st to do unto thy People; hear the Prayers and the Supplications, which thy Servant hath now offer'd up unto thee, in behalf of the whole World; why doth thy Wrath wax hot against us, why art thou so displeased at us? O let not thine Anger burn for ever, but incline thine Ears unto my Prayers and hear them, and answer them in Loving-kindness, Mercy and Forbearance. Hear, O Lord, and answer, not for my sake, but for the sake of him, who hath loved us and given himself for us, even thy most dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; who hath taught us when we pray to say.

Our Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come.

Thy Will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this Day our Daily Bread. And forgive us our Trespases, As we forgive them that Trespase against us. And lead us not into Temptation: But deliver us from Evil. For thine is the Kingdom, The Power and the Glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Here ends thy Afternoon's Devotions, but let not thy pious Sorrow end here; that must be more durable, it must be well rooted and settled in thee, being a gracious Disposition of Mind, which the Blessed Jesus requires of all his Followers. At Night let thy Devotions be the same as they used to be. You may use any of these Prayers, at any time, when you please, with your other Devotions.

The Conclusion.

I Have now briefly run over the several Duties of the Closet, and Instructed you, as well as I am able, how you may best perform them. I have nothing more to do, but earnestly to perswade you to be constant in the Practise of them, and, since you are made to know what your Duties are, not to be barren or unfruitful in that Knowledge.

And

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And methinks it should be no hard Task to prevail upon Christians to be careful in the performance of those Duties, which most of all show them to be Christians, which are so truly Pleasant in themselves, and will be so very Beneficial to us. Methinks, I say, these Duties should speak for themselves, and need no Advocate to Plead for them. But alas! too sadly do we find that the Charms of Religion have not that Effect upon Men, which may very justly be expected from them, and that all which we can say in Her behalf, is no more than is necessary, in this loose and degenerate Age. I shall therefore endeavour to draw Men to an habitual Practise of these Duties by these three very powerful Motives.

First, By our constant Performance of these Duties, we shall be best able to know, whether we are indeed Christians or no, whether we only put on an outward Form of Godliness, or are inwardly full of the Power of it.

Secondly, We can no way entertain and feast our Minds better, than by a frequent performance of these Duties.

Thirdly, They carry with them a very great and noble Reward, and will abundantly recompence all the Care we take in a due Discharge of them, both in this World, and that which is to come.

First, I say, by our constant performance of these Duties, we shall be best able to know, whither we are indeed Christians or no, whither we only put on an outward form of Godliness, or are inwardly full of the power of it. It is so much the Temporal Interest of every Man, to appear Virtuous and Religious in the World, that it is very much to be feared, that a great number of those Men who Talk much of Religion, and make a great show of it, yet are rotten at Bottom, and use it only as a Cloak for their Knavery. Thus did the *Pharisees* of Old, they Prayed in the Publick Streets, nay, and made long Prayers too, but it was only for this Reason, that they might with less suspicion devour Widows Houses. And therefore a Man, whose Religion never goes out of sight, but is always Acted before Men, may very justly Question whither he is truly Religious as he ought to be, and acts upon the Noble Principles of Christianity; whither he be sincere in what he doth, and doth not Serve God for the sake of *Mammon*. For we may flatter our selves, as the *Pharisees* did, and call our selves righteous, when yet a corrupt Principle of Worldly Interest may be at the Bottom of all our Righteousness, and spoil all. We may indeed

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indeed outwardly observe most of the Duties of Christianity, and yet be as far from being true Christians, as *Turks*, or Infidels.

But if we would surely know, whither we are sincere Christians or not, we must Try our selves, when we are out of the sight of the World, and when no Body is by to take notice of and applaud us for what we do. If in our Closets, (where, let our Behaviour be what it will, the World is never the wiser for it) if here, I say, we always choose to spend our time in conversing with God; and in the Holy Exercises of an inflamed Devotion, we may with very good Reason hope that our Religion is not dissembled, but that it flows from an inward sense of the many Obligations we lie under to be Religious. For no other Reason can be given why Men should perform the Duties of Religion, but these two, Either First, because they Design by an appearance of Virtue to gain a Reputation amongst Men, Or, Secondly, because they are truly sensible of the great Reasonableness and Necessity of Pleasing God, and Walking according to His Commandments. The First can have no place in the Closet, from which the World is shut out, and therefore cannot possibly

possibly tell whether we are good or bad there, and consequently can pass no Judgment upon us. But the Second will oblige us equally both in Publick and Private, and is the only Reason that can be given for Closet-Religion. If therefore thy retired Hours are constantly well spent, in Holy and Religious Exercises, this is a very great Proof of thy Sincerity, and may Reasonably give thee this Assurance, That not only the Form of Godliness fits upon thee, but also that the Power of it dwells in thee.

II. We can no way entertain and feast our Minds better, than by a frequent performance of these Duties. Our Souls, which are the Images of God, when they are left to themselves, and have no restraint upon them, Naturally Thirst after God, and desire to converse with Him. They perfectly well know Him to be the greatest Good, and therefore they Value Him and Delight in Him above all things; so that the true Happiness of our Souls consists in their Communion with God, and consequently the more closely they are united to Him, the greater must their Happiness and Pleasure needs be. 'Tis true indeed, we cannot see God Face to Face in this World; our present Enjoyment of Him
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and Conversation with him are very imperfect, in comparafion of what they fhall be in the other World. But yet, as imperfect as they are, they infinitely transcend all the other pleasures of Life. There is nothing elfe which the Soul can relifh; all other Joys are flat and infipid; but the pleasure of converfing with God ſhe taſts with inexpressible tranſport and delight.

And what place can be ſo proper for the Soul to meet her Beloved in, as the Cloſet, where there ſhall be nothing to diſturb or interrupt their Heavenly Converſation, no earthly Objects to divide and diſtract the Thoughts, but the World ſhall be quite ſhut out, and God ſhall be all in all? Here may ſhe enjoy him, as fully as poſſibly ſhe can in this Life, and Converſe with him as cloſely, as the vaſt diſtance between Heaven and Earth will let her. She cannot have a full ſight of him there; that Beatifick Viſion is reſerv'd for thoſe, who ſhall be thought meet to be made partakers of the Happineſs with the Saints in Heaven; but ſhe may now ſee him through a Glaſs darkly, and Converſe with him in the Holy Exercifes of the Cloſet, ſuch as reading his Word, ſpeaking to him in Prayer and Praise, and ſilently meditating on him and his Infinite

finite Perfections, which are the only ways we have of *Conversing* with God in this World.

I. Reading his Word ; and what can be more pleasant to a Rational Mind, than to view that Portraiture which God has given us of himself in his Holy Book ; where we have the clearest Manifestation of the Divine Nature, that this World affords us? How delightful must it needs be to turn over that *Book of God*, and continually to make new Discoveries there of the Divine Beauties and Perfections ; sometimes to observe his Justice, at other times his Mercy, then to admire his Wisdom, and to praise him for his Goodness ? What can be more entertaining than to follow him there through all the numerous Turnings and Windings of his Providence, and to behold and admire all the exquisite Art and Contrivance of the Great Governour of the World ? But above all, how strangely will it please us to acquaint our selves with the Will of God, which is here plainly, so far as it concerns us, made known to us ? This is indeed a great and noble Employment for the Mind, to study the Will of its Creator, and to reflect upon the reasonableness and excellency of those *Laws*, by which the All-wise God governs
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the Universe. Such great *delight* had Holy David in the study of these *Laws*, that they were his *meditation all the Day*, nay, and in the Night-season also did *he meditate in them*. He desired them more than Gold, yea than much fine Gold, and they were sweeter unto him than honey and the honey-comb. And indeed it is impossible it should be otherwise with any Pious Soul, since in these Sacred Books she may find all that she can desire and wish for. Doth she thirst after Knowledge, let her come hither and quench her Thirst at these Sacred Fountains, from which all valuable Knowledge flows. Would she gladly settle her Affections upon some truly lovely and desirable Objects? O let her draw near, and look stedfastly upon her God, who exposeth as much of himself to view in this Holy Book, as Humane sight can bear, and then let her love any thing else, if she can. Here she will find him, who alone is lovely, nay, and what will still more delight and please her, here will she find a sure way to the Eternal injoyment of him, whom she so much loves; here will she be instructed how to behave her self so, that her God, whom she thirsts after, may delight in her, and take her up from beholding his *binder parts*, to that Glorious place, where
the

she shall see Him Face to Face, and have a full and secure Enjoyment of Him for ever and ever. O! Let her then come with joy unspeakable to this study of these Divine Books, in which she shall find all that is worth Knowing or Loving, all that she Delights in, or Hopes for, all that can make her Easie here, and Eternally Happy hereafter.

II. Another way of Conversing with God is by Prayer and Praise. First, by Prayer, by which the Soul makes known her wants to God and sueth to Him for a supply of them. And what an ease must this be to our Souls; when oppressed with any trouble, or reduced to any straits or exigencies, to have the Liberty of Communicating their Case to God, and of begging help of Him who they are sure, both can and will help them. This is indeed a very great and valuable Privilege, and such an one, as we shall every Day have occasion to make use of. Let Afflictions, Crosses, Disappointment, or Troubles come when they will, the Pious Soul knows where she may get Protection from them, nay, where she may obtain Power to repel them, and to make them fly before her. She can call, and her God will hear and answer, *she can make her cry in an acceptable time, and shall be delivered out of all her troubles.*

O!

O! most comfortable and delightful Employment! easie in performance, and great in Reward, pleasant even in doing, and exceeding Beneficial when done; how must every Soul rejoyce that considers this? how gladly ought we always to hasten to this Holy Exercise, which even in our worst and most desperate Case will still afford us unspeakable Comfort and Relief.

Again, as to Praise, what more proper or agreeable Employment can be found out for the Soul, than the Praise of Him, who Made, Preserv'd, Redeem'd her, and is continually doing her Good. The delight which every grateful Soul takes in requiting it's Benefactors, as far as it is able, is inexpressible. Thanks and Praise is all that we can return God for his manifold and great Favours, these therefore we should always be Offering up. *We should praise his name from day to day, nay all the day long should we have pleasure therein.* We should talk of his Loving-kindness in the great Congregation, and in our Chambers also should our Songs be always of his Mercy; we should joyn with the Holy Angels above, in their Hymns of Praise, who cease not Day and Night to Praise, and Magnifie God, but count it their Happiness that they are allowed to sing of his Mercies, whose Praise fills Heaven and Earth.

III. The last way of Converſing with God here on Earth is by Meditation. And what reſhment will it be to our weary Souls, when quite ſpent and tir'd out with the buſineſs of this Life, to aſcend up to their Native Heaven, and there to feaſt themſelves with all the Pleaſures they are capable of; to give their Underſtandings, Wills, and Affections their full ſcope, to know all that is worth knowing, to chooſe every thing that is worth their choice, and to love that which alone is lovely. Had not the Mind the power of releaſing it ſelf thus from Earth ſometimes, this World would be but a very dull and melancholy Place, having nothing in it which can, in any Senſe, ſatiſſie our Souls, and make them truly Eaſie and Happy. O! Let us then often retire to our Cloſets, and give our Souls the Pleaſure of Converſing thus with God, let us be frequent in Reading his Word, in Praying to Him and Praiſing Him, and in ſending up our Souls to Him in Religious Meditation. Let us not deny our poor Souls, the only Happineſs which this World affords them, the only Food which can nourish them, but let them take as much of Heaven here, as they can, and Feed at preſent upon the Crumbs that fall down from their Lord's Table, till

at last they shall be admitted to sit down at his Table with Him in his Kingdom.

But if Pleasure be not strong enough alone to draw you to your Closet, yet sure when Profit is joyn'd to it you cannot possibly resist, and therefore I will proceed in the last place, to show that the Benefits which we shall receive from the frequent performance of our Closet-Duties, will be unspeakably great.

I. When we have accustomed our selves to delight in our Closets, we shall never have any time lye upon our Hands but shall know where to Employ all our vacant Hours. And this, as it will be a great ease to us here, so will it turn to great account hereafter. It will at present free us from all those troubles and inconveniencies which Idleness and want of knowing how to spend our Time continually bring upon us, which are very many and very great, and it will mightily shorten our sad Account, and take away more then one Third part from the Catalogue of our Sins. For I am sure I may safely say that, as Time is generally spent, above one Third part of the Sins which we commit is owing to Idleness. When therefore all our Idle Hours are turned into Hours of Devotion, how much better will our Accounts look, how much

much easier shall we our selves be here, and how much happier hereafter.

II. The constant performance of these Duties is a very likely way to settle such a firm sense of Religion upon our Minds as shall influence the whole Course of our Lives. For what we do in our Closets, is done with a great deal more thoughtfulness, and makes much deeper Impressions upon us, than what we do in Publick; so that we may with good Reason hope that the Religion of our Closets will shew forth it's fruit in all the other parts of our Lives and Conversations; and that it will bring an habitual Seriousness upon us, and fix God so firmly in our Thoughts, that it will be no easie matter to dispossess Him.

III. This is the best way we can take to procure God's Blessing upon us here, in our Worldly Concerns. For when He shall look down from Heaven, and behold a sincere and undissembling Soul, who does not only make a Profession of Him in Publick for present Advantage, but Worships Him in the most retired Places where no Eye can see her but his own, I say when He shall behold so much true and sincere Religion in any of us, it is ten thousand to one but that He will Bless us in all we under-

undertake. This, without doubt will make us very dear unto Him, for He loves Sincerity and Truth, and in all probability will put us under his particular Care and Protection. But,

IV. And Lastly, whether it obtains any Blessings for us in this World or no, it will without fail make sure of those of another World. At the Great Day of Retribution, when Men shall be Rewarded according to their Deeds, then will our Father, who hath seen us in secret, Reward us openly enough. Openly indeed, in the Presence of the whole World, in the Presence of his Holy Angels, and all the Saints in Heaven. Then every Moment that was Religiously spent in our Closets shall turn to our Advantage, and help to encrease our Happiness. Many shall we see in that Day, who though they made great shews of Religion in the World, yet really had none at all, who frequented the Churches to be seen of Men, but never approv'd themselves to God in their Closets. These Poor Unhappy Wretches, having sadly deceived their own Souls, shall now find the sad Consequence of this Deceit; they are now unmask'd, and their Form of Godliness will profit them no more, but they shall be given up to the Devil, whose
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Children indeed they have always been. But the sincere Christian, whose Religion has not been acted, but has been hearty and sincere, and the same in the Closet that it appear'd in the Church, shall dwell for ever with the God of Truth and Sincerity, and continually taste of those Joys, and drink of those Rivers of Pleasure, which are at God's right hand for evermore.

If then either the prospect of present Pleasure and Profit, or the hopes of future Happiness have any power over us, they will oblige us to a constant performance of the Duties of the Closet, which is attended with certain Pleasures and great Profit here, and will be rewarded with Eternal Happiness hereafter. And on the contrary, the neglect of them, being the highest contempt of God that can be, as shewing that we have indeed no true Religion at all, but that it is all false and counterfeit, and that we have no regard at all to the Commands of God, who has strictly enjoyned us thus to wait upon him in private, will have it's due reward in Hell, amongst the Wicked and Ungodly. Let us consider this, and be Wise.

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